

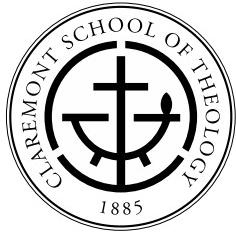
A MODEL FOR DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AMONG PACIFIC  
ISLAND LEADERS AT ST. LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, RICHMOND,  
CALIFORNIA

A Practical Research Project  
presented to  
the Faculty of  
Claremont School of Theology

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
'OFA UEPi HA'UNGA





This professional project completed by

**‘Ofa Uepi Ha’unga**

has been presented to and accepted by  
the Faculty of the Claremont School of Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

**Faculty Committee**

Chairperson: Rev. Dr. Sheryl Kujawa- Holbrook

**Dean of the Faculty**

Rev. Dr. Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook

May, 2021

## ABSTRACT

# A MODEL FOR DEVELOPING TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AMONG PACIFIC ISLAND LEADERS AT ST. LUKE'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, RICHMOND, CALIFORNIA

by

‘Ofa Uepi Ha’unga

The purpose of my research project is to develop transformative leadership roles of twelve immigrant Pacific Island leaders that are current leaders of committees at St. Luke’s UMC. The participants in my project consist of six Tongans and six Fijians. I was able to collaborate and advance God’s ministry with these leaders preaching the Word of God, leading weekly inspiring Bible studies, conducting monthly committee meetings, assisting in serving Holy Communion on the first Sunday of every month, gathering for gregarious fellowship, participating in intentional outreach ministries, hosting luncheons and eating together as a community of faith, celebrating the annual tithing/ stewardship, and operating in other activities of the church. These leaders have enthusiastically participated in this project’s workshops, training and meetings via zoom.

The context the church faces is that European American leaders left the church during the past forty years. Thus, there is an urgent need to equip current Pacific leaders spiritually to impart the necessary knowledge to meet to operate St. Luke’s UMC. Most of the leadership tasks were left solely on the pastors. Hence, I conducted my research project as a way to train and equip these Pacific Island leaders so they can lead the church.

I conducted three workshops, three meetings and weekly Bible studies three days a week to fulfill the purpose of training these leaders to become spiritually transformative and acquire

the necessary knowledge they need so they can perform their roles in the church. I sent them questionnaires a week prior to the workshops and then they returned their responses a day or two prior to the workshops. Their attendance was not consistent. Some had to work on the day of the workshops. The first workshop had perfect attendance with all twelve attending. The second and third workshops had less consistent attendance. Some sent their apologies due to work, and also sent their responses, of which I kept copies. Moreover, I called those members and discussed their responses over the phone.

In addition, I sent project research questionnaires to other Pacific Island clergy and lay leaders serving in Pacific Island Churches in the California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church. The purpose was to obtain their perspectives concerning Pacific Island leaders taking leadership roles in their churches. It was interesting to gather the information because some of the Pacific Island leaders displayed the early influence of the missionaries from the Pacific countries, they missionized in 1826.

In conclusion, I have seen growth in the spiritual transformative leadership roles of the twelve leaders at St. Luke's UMC. They have potential to lead and have learned some knowledge of the structure of the UMC denomination. They have applied their learnings to the operation of St. Luke's UMC. It was a joy to see them empowered in their leadership roles at St. Luke's UMC.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I praise and give thanks to the Holy Spirit for his guidance, provision, and in giving me strength to complete my writing project. God alone has empowered me to understand that the role of being a leader is to lead like Jesus Christ. In John 13, Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. This is an example that Jesus sets before us as leaders, we are servants of God and we are to serve others with love and humility. Hence, I am grateful to God for all his sanctifying grace and his abounding love that during this unprecedented time of the global pandemic COVID 19, my family and I are sheltering safely under God's mighty hands. Thanks be to God.

First of all, I want to express my deepest appreciation to my faculty advisor, Professor Sheryl Kujawa-Holbrook for her guidance, thoughtful insights, suggestions and her encouragement to complete my project. I also thank Professor Andrew Dreitcer for being my course advisor. Professor Dreitcer has given me invaluable advice on completing my degree. It was through his inspiring teaching in my first academic course at Claremont School of Theology that I decided to pursue my Doctorate of Ministry. I cannot thank you enough for all your wisdom and your encouragement. I am thankful to Professor Frank Rogers who used anecdotes that engaged my attention during his teaching. I thank you for your gifts and your wisdom in showing me that a leader is a person who is compassionate and puts others' interests before an agenda. Moreover, I thank Professor Karen Dalton who walked with me during the last phase of my writing. I thank you all for your encouragement, wise discernment and supporting me to complete my project. The zoom sessions you conducted during the COVID 19 really boosted my self-esteem to take the last stride and here I am at the finishing line.

I am also indebted to the twelve Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC for their willingness to participate in my research project. I thank all of you for your love, prayers, grace

and taking your time to join in our motivating group discussions and workshops. Your abundant knowledge and rich experiences have shed new light on my findings. We all learned together the meaning of becoming effective transformative leaders. Leaders are people who have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to share their wisdom, gifts and talents with everyone else in the congregation, community and the world. I would like to thank my two former District Superintendents and the first Tongan Deacon and the first Tongan Assistant Lay Leader from the California-Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church. I am very humbled to collect your valuable responses to my questionnaires. These resources will be valuable for future research on this particular topic - Pacific Island Leaders in the United Methodist Churches in the Future. I also want to thank all the members of St. Luke's UMC for all your support for God's ministry.

In addition, I dedicate this research project to both my beloved late parents, *Mr. Siosifa Lomavita Uepi* and *Mrs. Seini Langi Uepi* who have gone on to be part of the cloud of witnesses in the realm of God. I know that both of you would be very proud of my accomplishments. I have achieved my dreams. I will always treasure your persistent prayers, your dedication and encouragement for me to seek higher education and your never-ending labor of love.

Finally, I dedicate this research project to my beloved late husband *Rev. Dr. Taniela Fetu'u Ha'unga* who went to be with the Lord on Wednesday, December 25, 2019 at our residence in Richmond, CA. I am certain that the completion of my research project has brought tears of joy and abundant thanksgiving for you as well as our family. I will always treasure your love, endurance, wisdom and influential insights in my heart. I am determined to finish the race and I have done it with God's gracious and holy power. Also, a special dedication to my beloved late grandson, *Tevita Totau-he-Lotu Leisi* who passed on to join the Lord on December 28, 2017.

Moreover, I am also thankful for the immense support of my three daughters and two sons in law. Without your tireless support and encouragement, to take the leap of faith, I would not be able to complete my research project. I thank *Mr. Harris Isbell Satini* and *Mrs. Mele Tuipulotu Satini*, *Miss Veisinia Lupe Ha’unga*, *Mr. ‘Ofa ki muli Leisi* and *Mrs. Makeleta Lute Leisi*. Moreover, my heart is overflowing with divine joy that I have been blessed with my first precious, beautiful, biological granddaughter, *Miss Fiona Abigail Lydia Leisi*. Last, but not least, my beautiful granddaughters and my niece call me “Grandma’Ofa” whom I love and adore as my own: *Adele Olorose Guttenbeil*, *Melelatai Sola Jane Guttenbeil*, and *Grace Abigail Guttenbeil*. You are all a blessing for God’s ministry.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

A model for developing transformational leadership among Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's United Methodist Church, Richmond, California.

### **The Ministry Need**

My research project addresses significant need for training, guiding, and coaching immigrant Pacific Island Christian leaders in St. Luke's United Methodist Church, in Richmond, California, where I serve as the senior pastor. The purpose of my research is to equip these leaders to become more effective and more transformative spiritual leaders. Effective and transformational leaders are leaders who have an impact on the congregation and have make meaningful changes. With our church's vision, "to build a spiritual and compassionate relationship at St. Luke's UMC so we can support our leaders," we have focused on creating an atmosphere of encouragement and providing support for one another, modeling fairness and integrity, motivating self-esteem and recognizing the gifts Pacific Island leaders offer in God's ministry.

These leaders need to be guided and invested with the necessary tools and knowledge about their own Christian spiritual life, considering the mission of St. Luke's UMC. The church's mission is, "to know Christ and to make Christ known." Including these leaders in my project, I was attentive to and enhanced their Christian spirituality as they are the hands, feet, and voice of Christ. These leaders are living out their gifts from God to be Christian disciples in St. Luke's UMC as well as the world.

I observed that the spiritual need of Pacific Island Leaders is pivotal to becoming transformative leaders in the church. Each leader has focused on enriching their own Christian spirituality with guidance and help from God, as their Savior, and myself, as their facilitator. They have actively engaged in biblical and theological reflection about God's call and the

mission of the church. Through three workshops, I was able to examine the different gifts and talents these Pacific Island leaders bring to the table.

These Pacific Island leaders have brought their traditions, their rich experiences, their knowledge of the Scripture and their reasons for becoming transformative leaders to the church. With their gifts and talents, I am certain that these Pacific Island leaders can be spiritually transformed into a Christ-like leaders and help other members of St. Luke's UMC model the same belief. In addition, they would be able to embody their faith and living out the church's mission, which is "to know Christ and make Christ known." The leaders of St. Luke's UMC must recognize that spiritual transformation begins with each one of them. I have no ability to transform anything without God the omnipotent. He is all powerful. In Matthew 9:37-38, it says "Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.'"<sup>1</sup> Through prayer each one of us recognizes God as eternity. This research was inspiring because we collaborated as a team of gifted individuals towards our goal.

Some gaps need to be bridged for Pacific Island leaders in the US. Most of the time, they are not sure where they belong, either here or on their home islands. It is not an either/or, but a continuum. They struggle to parent, to care for elders, to support family and to teach the young to find healthy ways to live in complex societies and groups. Their struggles carry into their relationships among leaders. Thus, Pacific Island leaders are then always trying to lead and partner with people at different places along the continuum. They are challenged to honor the stories and places that ground them, sending home remittances to their family on distant islands in the South Pacific, to live into God's call, to share and embody the Word, the life and teachings

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 9:37-38.

of Jesus Christ. At the same time, with limited hours and many demands, this is never-ending work. To bridge the gap, and as time moves along, the younger generations grow into the leadership, thus, the gap itself changes. I hope to resource individuals trying to follow a call to lead or to learn. These resources may be money, training, mentors, coaches, identifying some who can start newer faith communities that will bring faith in ways that a more traditional church may not bring.

### **Response to the Need**

I facilitated three workshops and three meetings to train and equip twelve Pacific Island leaders in their roles as chairpersons and secretaries of the main committees of the St. Luke's UMC. In addition, to the workshops and meetings, I conducted regular Bible Study sessions since March 15, 2020 to encourage the practice of spiritual nourishment for the leaders. St. Luke's UMC shut down due to the global pandemic COVID-19. The current leaders coordinated with me to take turns to conduct Bible Study sessions via zoom on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 7:00p.m. to 8:30p.m. One of the purposes of my research project, to nurture, equip and observe the spiritual growth of these leaders and members of St. Luke's UMC was encouraged through the Bible study sessions. Grant Hagiya, the resident Bishop of the California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church, reflects on his concept of

#### *Spiritual Kaizen:*

Kaizen is a Japanese word derived from the root words *kai*, translated in English as “change” and *zen* translated as “good” or “better.” As I hope to apply it to your personal spiritual leadership, spiritual kaizen means slow, steady, yet continuous improvement. In practical terms it means that every day I learn one new thing, work on improving one behavior, or try to apply one new skill set. It means an intentional focus on a specific leadership learning, behavior, or practice. It also involves evaluative self-reflection. Such practices do not have to involve huge, ambitious, drastic changes or objectives but rather require small, increment,

positive ones. If every day I learn, grow, or develop capacity, over time I make a huge leap.<sup>2</sup>

The leaders of St. Luke's UMC have made wonderful strides in seeking to enrich their spiritual life with the Holy Spirit. They reassured me that they feel they are developing their faith on a higher level. These leaders are learning, growing, and have made progress in their spiritual journey. This is reflected in our Bible study sessions. I have heard their testimonies about their eagerness to grow stronger in faith in their spiritual journey and to live a life of Jesus' disciples. John C. Maxwell, in his book *LeaderShift*, suggests, "Goals helped me to do better. But growth helped me to become better." He continues, "achieving a goal had opened the door to the opportunity, but my ongoing ability to train others and develop my career as a trainer and speaker came as the fruit of my personal growth."<sup>3</sup> Growth is an ongoing process as these leaders experienced through their spiritual discipline in the grace of Jesus Christ, which provides a firm foundation in their spiritual growth.

Hence, Grant Hagiya writes in his book *Spiritual Kaizen* that the big picture "is the need for the entire system to be supportive of the growth of clergy and lay leadership. Of prime importance is the motivation of individuals to grow in their leadership of the church, but all the system of the church must be posed to contribute to and support this growth."<sup>4</sup> I am excited that St. Luke's UMC is so supportive of God's ministry through the leaders who are currently serving. With the church's clear vision and mission as their goal, the Pacific Island leaders now own their roles as leaders. This effective Pacific Island leadership team engenders a diversity of

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<sup>2</sup> Grant Hagiya, *Spiritual Kaizen: How to Become a Better Church Leader* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013), 5.

<sup>3</sup> John C. Maxwell, *LeaderShift: The 11 Essential Changes Every Leader Must Embrace* (New York: HarperCollins Leadership, 2019), 43.

<sup>4</sup> Hagiya, *Spiritual Kaizen*, 21.

gifts and styles. The chairpersons of all the church committees are vision-casters, people-engaging cheerleaders, detail-focused administrators, and task-focused implementers. Each leader brings passion and loyalty with their spiritual gifts, talents, and styles. In 1 Corinthians 12:26, Paul writes, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” These Pacific Island leaders sense, “we are all in this together.”

Pacific Island leaders need to strengthen knowledge about their roles as leaders in a local church, and strategies of communication within the UMC denomination. Leadership starts from the local church and moves from there to the circuit level, then the district level and then to the conference level. These Pacific Island leaders need to be educated about the structure of the United Methodist Denomination. More than half them lacked knowledge about the polity and how the whole denomination operates.

In addition, many Pacific Island leaders face some ongoing struggles in any local congregation, whether cross-cultural or multi-racial, including when the older generation desires to keep things the same way they were brought up in the Island, and the younger generation desires new things and change. This seems to extend to offering younger pastors less respect, perhaps, than their education or appointment may deserve.

### **Significance of the Need**

St. Luke’s UMC was established in 1941. The founders of the church were European Americans. They had five hundred and ninety-three members when it started. The numbers dwindled rapidly over the last three decades. The main reason for this huge decline was during the aftermath of the World War II in which church splits took place in St. Luke’s UMC after the World War II. Many people left and established new United Methodist Churches in Richmond. Two of four UMC parishes in Richmond were established from these splits. These separations

have allowed Pacific Island leaders to take leadership roles in St. Luke's UMC. European Americans are no longer the majority group in the congregation. Currently, there are only ten European American members left. Many of them are retired, elderly, widows and widowers with single families. Some moved out of state to live closer to their children and grandchildren. Many passed on to be with the Lord. The oldest European American is one hundred and three years old. I visited him during breakfast in January 2019 at our United Methodist Men's monthly gathering. During the pandemic, I stayed connected with him by phone once a week. I prayed with him and shared with him the Sunday scripture text. The remaining European Americans members are not attending church services consistently because of health conditions and most of them are in their nineties.

Today, the situation has changed. I am the senior pastor serving a diverse congregation, with most of the parishioners who are immigrants from the South Pacific. Thus, St. Luke's UMC is a multi-racial, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and inter-generational church. The congregation is made up of different racial and ethnic groups, including: Tongan Americans, Fijian Americans, European Americans, African Americans and Asian Americans. There are sixteen Tongan families, nine Fijian families, five European American families, and one African American, whose wife is from Thailand. Altogether, there are thirty-one families at St. Luke's UMC. All these families are professing members of the church.

This research project is important for many immigrant Pacific Island leaders as highlighted in *The Job Descriptions and Leadership Training in the United Methodist Church 2017-2020: A Leader Development Guide*:

Leaders can be developed to be missional role models by embodying God's grace in our own lives and providing places of hospitality for others to encounter Christ, offering Christ by providing opportunities for people to commit their lives to God and embody God's grace in their own lives, by instilling purpose through

nurturing people in Christian living and equipping them for service, and by providing avenues of engagement for others to live out their own call to ministry. This is discipleship. This is HOPE. This denotes a key point that “leadership-both laity and clergy- is a key factor in a church vitality.”<sup>5</sup>

Learning and acquiring necessary and effective leadership skills lends itself to produce many valuable assets through personal faith-sharing, attending Bible Study sessions, worship services and participating in mission opportunities. It is important that Pacific Island leaders are conscious of the United Methodist denominational polity and history. Furthermore, the *Job Descriptions and Leadership Training in the United Methodist Church 2017-2020*, reassures “Christian leaders help others grow in faith, share God’s gifts of peace, love, redemption and hope, making disciples who in turn make new disciples of Jesus Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

The Administration Council of the St. Luke’s UMC is overseen by the twelve Pacific Island leaders in this research project. These leaders have portrayed competent capacities, have achieved some academic level of education and are faithfully serving in God’s ministry at St. Luke’s UMC. All twelve committees at St. Luke’s are chaired by Pacific Island leaders. As the chair of the Nomination and Leadership Development committee, I believe that discipleship is not the role of the pastor. It is a call of every believer. 1Peter 2:9 states, “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”<sup>7</sup>

I am confident that the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke’s UMC are being called to spread the Holy Word of God and be in service to the needy. The core of their call is missional

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<sup>5</sup> Discipleship Resources, *Job descriptions and Leadership Training in the United Methodist Church 2017-2020* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resource, 2016), 8.

<sup>6</sup> Discipleship Resources, *Job descriptions and Leadership Training in the United Methodist Church 2017-2020*, 6.

<sup>7</sup> 1Peter 2: 9.

and relational in serving the elderly members in the church, in the local community of Richmond and in places of need. Robert Schnase, in his book, *Just say Yes!* describes, a “shift should occur toward changing the culture to become permission-giving rather than prerogative protecting, instead of “you ought,” the language shifts to “we will.”<sup>8</sup> These Pacific Island leaders now understand that saying *Yes*, is a possibility for growth and for transformation to take place. Hence, their focus is on the mission of the church, “To know Christ and make Christ known,” calling all people to join God’s ministry and learning to grow spiritually so transformation will happen.

These Pacific Island leaders are servant leaders who have a covenant with God. They are living in a community of faith, willing to stay in love with God in their mission and spiritual formation to lead like Jesus. Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry declare in *Lead Like Jesus Revised Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Model of all Time*, “Jesus was the greatest situational leader of all time, using “different strokes for different folks” depending on the situation.” They also add, “followers of Jesus have more in Jesus than just a spiritual leader, we have practical model of effective leadership for all organizations, for all people, for all situations.”<sup>9</sup>

The effectiveness of conducting and leading the twelve Pacific Island leaders is that they are given opportunities to grow spiritually and emerge as they explore their call to ministry. They explained that they are accountable to lead others to Christ and challenge any obstacles confronting them. They are willing to take risks to be vulnerable bring authenticity and offer

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Schnase, *Just say YES! Unleashing People for Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2015), 65.

<sup>9</sup> Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges, and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus: Revised Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of all Time* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing, 2016), 11-12.

integrity to God's ministry in their mission. In Baptism, these leaders are empowered with the gifts of God to preach, teach and to heal the lost, lonely, and hurting in our world. These Pacific Island leaders are commissioned to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of this world. One of their gifts is to empower others and bring them to know and have fellowship with Jesus Christ. Each individual leader knows that Jesus cared for the people who were hungry and afraid, and who were in the margins. Jesus cared for the physically sick and the spiritually oppressed. Jesus felt the needs of people. The power dynamics of leadership rest heavily on these Christian Pacific Island leaders. They are the current leaders of St. Luke's UMC. In addition, these leaders have developed a harmonious relationship with the other races and are conscious of their cultures and respect them regardless of their differences.

### **Justification of the Need**

The justification for the research project is that the twelve Pacific Island leaders are willing to become servant leaders, to learn, to acquire new knowledge about United Methodist Church polity and history. With the formation of their spiritual transformation and their call, they are willing to shift gears and become servant leaders. Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell suggest in *The Servant Leadership in Action*, that servant leaders are willing to "listen receptively to what is being said and not said." These leaders are willing to strive to understand and empathize with others. They have demonstrated that respecting other people; deserving acceptance and recognizing them for their special and unique spirits are significant factors of unity. Another powerful force for "transformation and integration are the potential for healing one's self and one's relationship to others."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Ken Blanchard and Renee Broadwell, *Servant Leadership in Action* (Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2018), 15.

Each leader has brought forth skills, gifts and their personal rich experiences required for their leadership roles in St. Luke's UMC. Thus, the next section will highlight the Pacific Island leaders' postcolonial, cultural, social, political, educational, and religious influences and background for this project. These would impact on their style of leadership. Juana Bordas in her book, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit*, mentions:

Diversity is transforming leadership. She was referring to our present multicultural age, when a leadership model is in our midst and there are different practices and principles of communities of color, that will move us toward a more pluralistic and equitable society. Authentic diversity will be realized only when the voices, values and contributions of all Americans are integrated into mainstream leadership.<sup>11</sup>

Colonialism in the Pacific has a strong influence on these leaders' role at St. Luke's UMC.

### **Postcolonial Leadership Model in the Pacific**

There is a vast contrast in the method of leadership in the Pacific Islands from that in the Western world. In the Island of Tonga, practices a hierarchical system, whereby the highest rank of leadership is the Royal family. Tonga is the only surviving kingdom in the South Pacific that still has a monarchy. The centralized power is with the royal family and the leadership is from the top of the pyramid to the commoners at the bottom at the grassroots level. The next in the hierarchy are the nobles, who are appointed by the king. In addition, state ministers are appointed by the king and they effect the transformation of traditional chiefs. This hierarchical system is very rigid. In my opinion, the people on top of the pyramid enjoy legitimacy in Tonga. I have witnessed the frustration about that model of leadership that oppressed the life of the commoners at the grassroots level. In November 16, 2006, a riot erupted in Tonga, related to the way people were being oppressed by the political system, namely the hierarchy.

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<sup>11</sup> Juana Bordas, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers Inc., 2012), ix.

Abby McLeod in her discussion paper, “Leadership Models in the Pacific,” notes, “Tonga is largely dependent upon personal standing. Leaders are expected to be educated, but unless title, their position are somewhat tenuous.”<sup>12</sup> Some of the commoners, who have earned higher education degrees overseas, have become leaders in various sectors in Tonga, such as private companies and heads of government departments. Some commoners from the grassroot level have become members of Parliament and are key figures in the operation of the government. They are well-educated.

Tongans are increasingly frustrated with ranked people lacking leadership skills and behaving in an unethical manner. One way in which this frustration has been expressed is through decades of public dissent by members of the pro-democracy movement. From my own observation, the Tongans still respect and continue to value our king and we are respecting the ranking system. However, the educated middle class is rising to seek greater say in the governance of our kingdom. In the 1980’s these demands resulted in a rise of political debate in the media and multiple court cases centered in the claims against government excess, nepotism and corruption. This led to the riot on November 16, 2006. This riot broke out in the capital of Nuku’alofa when the Legislative Assembly adjourned for the year without passing legislation to facilitate political reforms. While proposal to increase the number of people’s representative remain modest, the riots led to the announcement that 21 out of 30 members of Parliament will be popularly elected in the next election, scheduled to be held in 2008.<sup>13</sup>

The Tongan hierarchical system originates in pre-colonial times. My Tongan ancestors have developed their own leadership system, with the king and the royal family at the top of the hierarchy, before colonization took place in the Pacific region. The leadership system in Tonga is unique. However, changes have taken place after the missionaries arrived in Tonga. The missionaries were facilitating changes as they were bringing Christianity to Tonga. They focused on changes from the level of Kings to the commoners. The kings and the royal families accepted

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<sup>12</sup> Abby McLeod, “Leadership Models in the Pacific,” in *State Society and Governance in Melanesia* 6 (Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at the Australian National University, Canberra, Australia, 2008): 9.

<sup>13</sup> Abby McLeod, “Leadership Models in the Pacific,” 9.

Christianity brought by the missionaries. In return, the kings, with the help of the nobles and the chiefs facilitated this religious change for the whole populations. There have been gradual changes in the use of power by the nobles, chiefs and the ownership of estates in the kingdom of Tonga. It can be said that these changes were for the better, in terms of political and social issues.

The Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's are, for the most part, not affected by the changes of leadership in Tonga. Although there is a close relationship between the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC and their relatives back in Tonga, the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC are practicing some leadership traits inherited from Tonga and Fiji and adapting them to the Western way of leadership.

Moreover, Kwok Pui-Lan and Stephen Burns note, "missionizing was seen as a civilizing effort which aimed at converting the natives of every conquered land, homogenizing these subjects and turning them into Christianity shaped in the image of their western tutors and masters."<sup>14</sup> These authors assert the idea that the presence of western missionaries in various parts of the world influenced the leaders of various colonized countries, who turned and adapted to western models of leadership. Thus, the mission of the early missionaries was to convert, persuade and conquer chiefs to give up their power of suppressing the commoners and to accept Christianity as a way of maintaining peace and harmonious relationship in the Islands.

In addition, early missionaries lacked the tools of collaborating with diversity and cultural differences. My observation is that the early influence of the British missionaries in Tonga greatly impacted converting the ruling kings from worshipping idols into accepting

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<sup>14</sup> Pui- Lan Kwok and Stephen Burns, *Postcolonial Practices of Ministry: Leadership, Liturgy and Interfaith Engagement* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2016), 30.

Christianity. Hence, Tongan socio-political, cultural, and religious characteristics were transformed. I attest to the fact that early British missionaries were very successful in bringing Christianity to Tonga, as my ancestors converted from paganism to worship Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

Furthermore, the leadership model has also changed, and the current monarchy has empowered the people to voice their opinions on political matters. Contemporary Tongan religious leadership is dedicated to “love God first” and everything else next. Tongan leaders are God-fearing people, one noticeable influence of the early missionaries in Tonga. The current Pacific Island leaders of St. Luke’s UMC, are deeply embedded in those values of fearing God, and their cultural and religious practices reflect their faith in Jesus Christ.

One of the interesting concepts that Kwok Pui-Lan and Stephen Burns mention is that postcolonial leadership focuses on interactional and intersubjective activities, meaning that leaders are called to value relationships to engage and work collaboratively with one another. They highlight, “Postcolonializing pastoral leaders are great agents and thoughtful managers of change within communities.”<sup>15</sup> Both authors have expressed their concept of postcolonial leadership as, “actively seeking out other voices, especially submerged, ignored, or rejected voices, to be invited to the table, and there to articulate their own authentic voice. Subjugated voices with submerged and often despised knowledge are given room at the postcolonial table.” Today, there is room for commoners, especially women to voice their opinions in some discussions about communal issues and even more on political issues. Some of Pacific Island leaders in my research team were educated overseas and through their postcolonial traits they

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<sup>15</sup> Pui-Lan Kwok and Stephen Burns, *Postcolonial Practices of Ministry: Leadership, Liturgy and Interfaith Engagement*, 30.

have shared the priority of accepting one another and valuing the opinions of other members. Others in the leadership team were educated in the U.S. and understand leadership models from the lens of western society. A few Pacific Island leaders received their high school diplomas from Tonga. Thus, this Pacific Island leader's team can adapt and has shared skills and gifts with the operation of St. Luke's UMC.

These Pacific Island leaders based their faith and their rich cultural experiences on God. They know that with God's abounding love, grace, and forgiveness they are being called into Christ's mission in the world. They have blended their kinship relations, cultural identities, social values, political insights, educational accomplishments, and religious experiences with European Americans experiences to glorify God's ministry. I have observed a coherent transition from the remaining European American members to these Pacific Island leaders that has taken place ever since I began serving St. Luke's UMC in 2017. The idea Juana Bordas crafts in her book, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit*, highlights "Multicultural leadership is an inclusive approach and philosophy that incorporates the influences, practices, and values of diverse cultures in a respectful manner. Multicultural leadership resonates with many cultures and encourages diverse people to actively engage, contribute and tap into their potential."<sup>16</sup>

Based on my experience and study of the gradual influence postcolonialism has had on these Pacific Island leaders, I affirm that changes are taking place for the overall improvement of leadership models in the Pacific Islands. These changes are happening because Pacific Island people are being educated in advanced institutions, most especially in the political, social and religious realms. These changes will benefit many people, especially the commoners, at the

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<sup>16</sup> Juana Bordas, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit*, 8.

lower rungs of the hierarchical system. More people are hearing the unheard voices, the cry of the needy and the silenced and marginalized in many areas of the society.

## **CHAPTER ONE: TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP**

The term, transformative leadership, points people to the idea of serving people who are in dire need. This means helping elderly Pacific Islanders who need assistance with healthcare and other free services that are available in the church and the local community. A transformative leader has one or more spiritual gifts: teaching, exhortation (encouragement), servanthood, leadership, administration, helping and shepherding. Moreover, a transformative leader shows evidence of passion for developing and maintaining religious and secular relationships and takes to heart the interests of people who are hurt, seek consolation, seek justice, need peace and love. A transformative leader uses his/her communication skills and ability to listen to and to communicate with people of all ages and has the ability to work with leaders of other faiths and research and program development skills. In addition, a transformative leader must show genuine interest in improving quality of life in the congregation and the community, especially among displaced and marginalized people.

There are multiple definitions of transformative leadership. According to the Merriam Webster dictionary, it defines these two words separately. A leader is an “office or position of a leader”<sup>17</sup> and transformative is “causing or able to cause an important and lasting change in someone or something.”<sup>18</sup> Another definition Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, in their book, *Transformational Leadership* describe are “those who stimulate and inspire followers to

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<sup>17</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Leadership,” accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/leadership>.

<sup>18</sup> Merriam-Webster, “Transformative,” accessed September 1, 2019, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transformative>.

both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own capacity.

Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual follower's needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization.”<sup>19</sup>

Another definition John C. Maxwell, in his book, *LeaderShift*, put forth, stating “If your actions inspire people to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, then you are a transformational leader.”<sup>20</sup> He emphasizes that the transformative leader will “influence on people to think, speak, and then act in ways that make a positive difference in their lives and the lives of others.” He stresses, “transformational leaders see things others do not see.” He impressed me in that he mentions, “Organizations are not limited by their opportunity; they are limited by their leader.” I envisioned that these Pacific Island leaders would benefit from many more opportunities when they become transformed. It is an eye-opening statement when Maxwell offers, “As leaders, you and I have to be changed to bring change. We teach what we know, but we produce who we are.”<sup>21</sup>

Two thousand years ago, Jesus called his disciples to follow him and in doing so, demonstrated transformational leadership in all its aspects. The best transformative leader in the history of mankind is Jesus Christ. He came to serve the hurting (Luke 4:18) and save the lost (Luke 19:10). In him, we witness the greatest transformational leadership skills the world has ever known. Jesus led out of his heart for the world. He demonstrated individual and communal

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<sup>19</sup> Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc., 2006), 3.

<sup>20</sup> John C. Maxwell, *LeaderShift*, 215.

<sup>21</sup> John C. Maxwell, *LeaderShift*, 223.

compassion, healing, preaching, and recruiting his disciples. Jesus' ministry has portrayed exemplary transformational leadership.

In addition, John Wesley, the founder of the United Methodist Church, was an exemplary leader. I include him in this project as an example of a transformative leader. I also highlighted two biblical leaders, Moses, and Apostle Paul as examples of models of transformative leaders in the Bible. These leaders' characteristics are relevant to training these Pacific Island leaders. They can apply knowledge about these leaders to their role as transformative spiritual leaders in the church and in the community. They were very eager to adapt and apply what they have learned. The most beautiful element of St. Luke's UMC is people enjoying a transforming relationship with Jesus through the witness of these Pacific Island leaders.

### **John Wesley's Leadership Model**

Lovett H. Weems, Jr in *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* has projected this perspective of the concept of leadership, professing, "Leadership in the Wesleyan spirit begins with people." "The beginning point for John Wesley was always people and their needs. More than any other value of Wesley's, it was a holistic concern for the children of God that provided the starting point for leadership decisions and actions."<sup>22</sup> John Wesley was passionate about the human needs of all people: poor people, working-class people, and people outside the church. Weems reveals that the Wesley brothers and Methodist evangelist, George Whitefield, were "men burning with a powerful belief in the importance of the common man's uncommon soul."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 13.

<sup>23</sup> Weems, Jr., *Leadership in the Wesleyan Spirit*, 8.

People witnessed that John Wesley was a true, faithful, servant leader of God who cared for them. He performed his ministry through the eyes and the experiences of people who were different from him. The social, economic, and educational backgrounds of poor people were totally different from John Wesley's status in society. He was well-off economically and well-educated. This was not a barrier to John Wesley because he was preaching to poor people. Thus, John Wesley's leadership, in his preaching and his ministry for the poor, sent healing messages throughout Britain during his lifetime. He stayed connected with people. John Wesley's first open-air sermon was in Kingswood, a suburban area in South Gloucestershire, England on February 17, 1739 with two hundred coal miners attending. The crowd heard the healing message, and ten thousand people flocked to hear more. George Whitefield had to contact John Wesley for help as so many people were coming to hear the message of God.

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism lived out his call and belief that the work of Christ is necessary, vital to life and rebirth about proclaiming the good news, especially the grace of God, and that he must invite people into spiritual life. John Wesley's description of God's grace drew many followers to seek salvation and turn to God for the forgiveness of their sins. He defined grace as "unmerited" and that humanity was not to wait idly to experience grace, but to engage in the means of grace.

Today, Methodists view grace in two ways. They are works of piety and works of mercy. Works of piety call individuals to read, meditate, study Scriptures, pray, fast, attend worship services, live and share faith with others. The communal practice of works of piety is regularly sharing the Sacraments, and Christian Conferencing through Bible Study where each one is accountable to one another. Works of mercy require the believer to practice doing good works, visiting the sick, visiting those in prison, feeding the hungry, and giving generously to the needs

of others. The communal practice of works of mercy calls the community to seek justice, end oppression and discrimination, and address the needs of the poor.

John Wesley was a transformative leader, who advocated and challenged Methodists to end slavery, when he went between 1736 to 1737 to preach to the colony of Georgia in America. He was not happy seeing the way slaves were treated on the plantations. John continued to campaign against slavery throughout his life. In one of his sermons in Bristol, he advocated to end slavery in England. John Wesley was a strong campaigner for freedom and the abolition of slavery even before it aroused public interest.

### **Theological Model of Leadership: Moses**

Based on my experience, I recognize Moses as an exemplary Biblical leader, who was influential and had the strength and wisdom to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. Moses was called by God to lead the Israelites out of captivity and slavery from Egypt to the Promised Land. At first, Moses refused to obey God. The encounter Moses had with God in the burning bush, urged Moses to obey God's commandments. Moses' leadership skills set the Israelites on a course that led them from being captive to receiving their freedom. This is an example of being a transformative leader, leading a whole nation from captivity and slavery to become free in the Promised Land of Canaan.

Exodus 3: 7-8 reads:

The LORD said to Moses. I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt. I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Exodus 3: 7-8.

At first, Moses was hesitant, and made excuses, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ What shall I say to them?”<sup>25</sup> Moses received God’s profound answer, “I AM WHO I AM.” “Thus, you shall say to the Israelites I AM has sent me to you.” Moses fled from Pharaoh because he killed an Egyptian and buried him in the sand. Moses felt incompetent to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. He justified this to God by saying he is not worthy to appear before the Israelites and Pharaoh. Moses was transparent in admitting his weakness to lead the Israelites. However, God was using Moses to display his power and glory over Pharaoh’s magicians’ power. Moses witnessed the ten plagues in Egypt and, finally, Pharaoh released the Israelites to go.

As a leader, Moses did not have the power or authority to make the Israelites leave Egypt, he had to convince them that they should leave. It began with a vision. Moses explained to the Israelites that it was time to claim what God had promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a land of their own. Where they were going and why, as a better destination than their current situation, became clear and that is why people followed Moses as their leader. Not only did Moses present a clear vision to the people of where they were going, but also the people believed God was with Moses. The process of shaping, articulating and embracing the vision that Moses brought to the Israelites was crucial to the Israelites when they left Egypt.

Moses had outstanding attributes of a good leader. He was raised as the Prince of Egypt, but claimed his true identity as an Israelite. Based on study and experience, it is clear that Moses was a God-sent messenger with a strong faith to challenge Pharaoh, “let my people go.” He confronted Pharaoh with clarity of conviction and vision. Moses finds his core leadership

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<sup>25</sup> Exodus 3:11-12.

strength in justice and empathy with his fellow Israelites. Moses was a leader who leads the Israelites from the oppressed life struggles to a new covenant with God. Moses was called by God to sustain a covenant with the Israelites in the wilderness. With the leadership of Moses, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. Pillars of cloud and pillars of fire led the Israelites by day and by night. They wandered in the wilderness for “forty” years. Moses was a bold leader, patient to put up with the daily complaints and negative attitudes of the Israelites. God was with Moses directing him to be brave and obey his commandments.

There was a leadership transition when Jethro, the Midian priest, Moses’ father-in -law, came to visit Moses. He heard that God called Moses to bring the Israelites out of slavery from Egypt. Moses was a brave leader. In Exodus 18, Moses listened to his father-in-law’s advice. Jethro suggested that Moses should find competent leaders to judge the people’s minor disputes, as Moses had to adjudicate major cases that seemed to be difficult to solve. In Exodus 18:18 Jethro says, “You will surely wear yourself out, both you and all these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you, you cannot do it alone.”<sup>26</sup>

One of the paramount facts about an effective leader is that he/she must possess the attribute of listening well and having a confidant to help. Jethro’s wisdom becomes a lesson in shared leadership. Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile state, in *Leadership Essentials*, “Serving alone can be challenging, not to mention lonely.”<sup>27</sup> Obviously, Moses trusted his appointed elders and granted them permission to follow God’s call. Jethro laid out some common baseline qualifications for selecting those leaders. Charles M. Olsen and Ellen Morseth state, in *Selecting*

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<sup>26</sup> Exodus 18:18.

<sup>27</sup> Carol Cartmill and Yvonne Gentile, *Leadership Essentials* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press 2006), 23.

*Church Leaders: A Practice in Spiritual Discernment*, that Jethro said to Moses, “Choose skilled leaders from the community.” Moses was humble and followed Jethro’s advice. Secondly, he was instructed to choose, “God-fearing leaders and lastly choose trustworthy leaders.”<sup>28</sup> Moses was quick to respond and put Jethro’s advice into action. These are some qualities that leaders in churches and communities should possess. In this context, John C. Maxwell, in his book *LeaderShift*, raises, “Leadership is the ability and willingness to make a leadership change that will positively enhance organization and personal growth.”<sup>29</sup> Moses was willing to shift and adapt his model of leadership because he was confident in his own judgment and abilities. Based on study and experience it is valid that Moses’ leadership was of the highest caliber in the Old Testament. He led a whole nation (about three million people) through the wilderness for approximately forty years. Moses faced many obstacles, stressful life situations and challenges and yet he trusted God and embraced change every day. Moses was called by God, “chosen by the One who knew him best, flaws and all, to become a leader in order to deliver God’s people to new life.”<sup>30</sup> I would add that Moses built a team of leaders who shared the same values. More importantly, Moses’ support team connected spiritually with the same God. No matter how gifted an individual is, if that individual does not share the same values, beliefs, and culture as the leader, that person’s ministry cannot be expected to be excellent. Moses’ team supported Moses’ vision.

In working with the Pacific Island leaders during this research project, I have observed that they display attributes of being skillful, trustworthy, patient, God-fearing, brave, grace-

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<sup>28</sup> Charles M. Olsen and Ellen Morseth, *Selecting Church Leaders: A Practice in Spiritual Discernment* (Nashville, TN: Upper Room, 2002), 6.

<sup>29</sup> John C. Maxwell, *LeaderShift*, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Betsy Heavner and Michael A. Bella, *What Every Leader Needs to Know About Spiritual Leadership* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resource, 2010), 7.

filled, and confident leaders in taking everything to God in prayerful discernment. They always include the concept of God's grace as prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace, urging them to work toward perfection. I could sense their willingness to change and adapt to this new land of many opportunities. John C. Maxwell, in *LeaderShift*, further emphasizes, "People may honor you for what you did yesterday, but they respect you for what you are doing now. I value yesterday but I live in today."<sup>31</sup>

These Pacific Island leaders value their cultures and their traditions and have always treasured that as an integral part of their identity, but they are adapting their ways of living to their new country. Some of these Pacific Island leaders are transitioning slowly by observing, surveying, and applying what is the best fit for them as they integrate the two cultures. They have become more effective and proficient in their leadership style in St. Luke's UMC.

Moreover, these Pacific Island leaders are sharing, articulating and embracing the church vision, which is "building a spiritual, compassionate relationship at St. Luke's UMC so we can support our leaders." These Pacific Island leaders understand the ethos of the parishioners. They always stay committed, understand and accepts the vision, values, culture, and beliefs of the church. The leadership team are dedicated to remaining united during this COVID-19 pandemic. This is the transformative spiritual leadership model of the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC.

### **Apostle Paul's Leadership Model:**

The second theological prominent figure, who I take as a model of transformative and spiritual leadership, is the Apostle Paul from the New Testament. The text I choose is 1 Timothy 3: 1-10 in which the Apostle Paul was writing to young Timothy whom he addresses as a "loyal

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<sup>31</sup> John C. Maxwell, *LeaderShift*, 11.

child in the faith.”<sup>32</sup> In this context, Paul reassured Timothy about the significance of becoming an outstanding leader. He reminded Timothy to remain steadfast in his faith and continued to preach the divine doctrine of faith and not get distracted by false discipline. He urged Timothy to dwell in love that comes from a pure heart and a sincere faith. In this Epistle, Paul reaffirmed to Timothy that a good leader must be “temperate, sensible, respectful and an apt teacher.”<sup>33</sup> These are the qualities of a good leader.

In addition, the Apostle Paul wrote his Epistle to Titus 1:5-6, saying, “You should appoint elders in every town, as I directed you: someone who is blameless, married only once, whose children are believers, not accused of debauchery and not rebellious.”<sup>34</sup> Paul was an amazing leader who was spiritually authentic and lived out his faith. The total conversion of Saul of Tarsus to the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus was an imperative call to Paul to have compassion for God’s ministry. Moreover, Paul became an influential leader who led others to know God. In this conversion, Paul was warned not to execute Christians, but, rather, to preach the Gospel of Jesus and to direct believers to receive their salvation through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ on the cross. Paul became a spiritual transformative leader to so many people. It was through his preaching, witnessing, teaching and his writings that so many Christian churches were transformed to know Jesus Christ as their Savior.

I have selected Biblical leaders such as Moses and Paul to highlight the theme of my research project, which is leading with a transformative spiritual life to lead other followers to know Christ and live their faith in authentic ways. These Pacific Island leaders have discovered their spiritual gifts and they are living examples of the Great Commandment and “who loves

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Timothy 3: 1-10.

<sup>33</sup> 1Timothy 3:1-10.

<sup>34</sup> Titus 1:5-6.

God and loves neighbor.” This team have come to realize they are growing Christian disciples who understand “everyone has spiritual gifts and experiences that are vital to the body of Christ.”<sup>35</sup> These gifts include: compassion, discernment, faith, helping, leadership, and servanthood.

In our weekly Bible studies, these leaders displayed their gifts, have been willing to live the Great Commitment from Matthew 16:24 to embody God’s love individually through spiritual disciplines and the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 19-20 to go and take God’s love into the world by making disciples, baptizing, and teaching faithful obedience.

In Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry’s book, *Lead Like Jesus: Revised Lessons From The Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time*, they profess “we believe that real lasting change starts on the inside, with our hearts.”<sup>36</sup> The theory of allowing Jesus to transform a leader or someone from the inside out can influence others that person has met. This means that leadership can influence the thinking, behavior, or development of another person. These authors emphasize the realization that Jesus was the greatest leader of all time.

Jesus taught his disciples that to be a leader, one must be a servant of all. A good example of this is Jesus’ mother, Mary. She exemplified servant leadership in Jesus’ life. Mary answered the angel who came to tell of the birth of Jesus. Mary responded, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your words.”<sup>37</sup> Mary passed on to her son a legacy of obedience, submission, faith, and service. Jesus’ death on the cross was a sign of obedience to do God’s will. Servant leadership is the only approach to leadership that Jesus validates for his

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<sup>35</sup> 1 Corinthians 12.

<sup>36</sup> Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus: Revised Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time*, ix.

<sup>37</sup> Luke 1:38.

followers. *To Lead Like Jesus* amplifies the challenges that Jesus faced and yet he was the greatest leader of all ages.

The first aspect of leading like Jesus is understanding that leadership is a transformational journey. At the same time, leadership role is challenging, harsh, benign, destructive, and transformational. “Transformation happens when we can pool our resources and power to fulfill both our needs. Thus, a transformation happens in both of us as we collaborate to better our communal situations.”<sup>38</sup> The key paradigm of transformational leadership is the empowerment of these leaders’ abilities to see gifts in others, name and cultivate the gifts and unleash these gifts and people into ministry of St. Luke’s and community.

The second aspect of leading like Jesus involves aligning our hearts, hands and habits. Aligning refers to shifting one’s style of leadership by modeling Christ-like behavior and hands-on approach to the cry of the needy at church and in the community. Moses, Paul and John Wesley aligned their hearts, hands and habits to lead people to see Jesus on the cross. “When these four leadership domains are aligned our perspectives are changed, and we gained people’s trust, communities develop, and the organization’s culture is transformed.”<sup>39</sup>

St. Luke’s Pacific Island leaders demonstrated their servant leadership through our outreach ministry, by volunteering to feed the homeless the second Friday of every month at the Greater Richmond Interfaith Program Center, in Richmond, California. St. Luke’s is also a member of I AM HOPE Immigration Task Force in El Sobrante UMC, which assists undocumented members of St. Luke’s UMC. We have been proactive in tapping into resources that are available for people who need help in our church. The immigration task force has given

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<sup>38</sup> Grant Hagiya, *Spiritual Kaizen*, 78.

<sup>39</sup> Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus: Revisited Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of All Time*, 35.

pamphlets to our church members about free agent services, such as attending free citizenship classes and immigration attorneys who would help for less cost.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE PROJECT

My research team holds all significant leadership and administrative positions at St. Luke's UMC. Hence, the workshops and the weekly Bible studies I facilitated were necessary tools for them to integrate new knowledge, and to apply their understanding of spiritual transformative leadership aspects to the church's operation. They integrated their knowledge and skills and discerned their leadership roles in ways that reflected their spiritually transformative experiences. My research team is composed of different individuals- many members, one team. 1Corinthians 12: 4-6 reads, "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone."<sup>40</sup> Different...but the same.

One of the examples of the spiritual transformation occurring, was their increased confidence to conduct weekly Bible studies every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. They showed spiritual growth in their knowledge in sharing and reflecting on the weekly UMC lectionary. They revealed their ownership of the mission of the St. Luke's UMC, "To know Christ and make Christ known."

These are the positions of the members of my research project.

- The chairperson for the Administration of Board Council
- The chairperson for the Finance Committee.
- The chairperson for the Board of Trustees.
- The chairperson for the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the Worship Committee and the Youth.
- The chairperson for the Outreach Committee.

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<sup>40</sup> 1 Corinthians 12: 4-6.

- The director for the Sunday School and the Choir director.
- The Finance secretary.
- The membership secretary.
- A member of the Scholarship Committee.
- A member of the Finance Committee.
- A representative of the young adults.
- A representative of the youth.

The three workshops, and three meetings and weekly Bible studies were done virtually.

They were held after church on Sunday afternoons. I sent out questionnaires one week prior to the workshops. The purpose of the workshops was for the leaders to learn and acquire new knowledge and in-depth perspectives about what it means to be a spiritually transformative leader the significant traits needed for St. Luke's UMC present and future leaders. In addition, I collected their feedback about what is effective spiritually transformative leadership. This would be beneficial for future Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC. The strategy that I planned was achieved through their individual participation in the workshops and Bible studies. I arranged the time frame to included three workshops with ongoing weekly Bible studies as part of the process. I observed that this team ministry is crucial in inviting, equipping and releasing others to contribute meaningful service for kingdom building.

### **The First Workshop**

**Question#1: In general, what kind of Pacific Island leaders do you recommend for St. Luke's UMC in the future?**

The information that I collected was rich and valuable as I observed that most Pacific Island leaders were leaning more toward spiritual leadership as being the most important. All

responses were sent via email. These leaders stressed that leadership “must be spiritually rooted in Christ and armored with the fruits of the Holy Spirit.” All agreed that a spiritually transformative person is “a leader who has spiritual gifts, such as leadership, faith, servanthood, discernment, is able to teach and show evidence of active and growing discipleship.” Most of them noted that a spiritually transformative leader is “a person who is committed to demonstrate that he/she is committed to give generously as part of his/her stewardship for God’s ministry.” In addition, these leaders have stated that a spiritually transformative leader “must be trustworthy, compassionate, strong to preach the Word of God and able to evangelize other people to follow Jesus.” They confirmed that spiritually transformative leaders “must be good role models, able to lead all age groups with faith, love and honesty, and be visionaries with strategies to think outside the box.” Some of these leaders suggested that a spiritually transformative leader is “a smart and effective leader who understands the values of the Pacific Islands and relates them to St. Luke UMC’s context.”

**Question #2: What are some qualities of the Pacific Island leaders that would transform St. Luke’s UMC? Please list and explain.**

The first quality that mentioned by the Pacific Island leaders to help transform St. Luke’s UMC are leaders “who are God-fearing.” “Transformative leaders should be able to proclaim the Word of God with enthusiasm, transparency, and respect.” These leaders emphasized that transformative leaders “should understand the traditions and cultures of the congregants, so they do not offend their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. They must be mindful and respectful of them.” Another important quality they stresses is that a spiritually transformative leader is a leader who “leads like Jesus”. He/ She must demonstrate Biblical principles of serving people who are living in the margins. This leader must have strong communication skills, decision-

making capacity, adherence to honesty, and a high level of integrity. Such a leader must elevate the dire needs of those who are incarcerated in the community. Other qualities that these Pacific Island leaders stated spiritually transformative leaders must:

lead with humility and be approachable; be ready to serve and to have a spiritual mentality; have a vision about the church's growth and work collaboratively with others; and have a positive attitude, be confident and stay committed to the mission and the vision of St. Luke's UMC. They must be able to work as a team with other members of the church and they must be loving and compassionate in showing genuine interest in responding to the hopes and concerns of the people in the church as well as the community.

**Question #3: What are the roles of the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC and are these roles clearly displayed? Please explain.**

The roles of the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC cover a wide range of responsibilities. All of them have mentioned that it all begins with the "spiritual realm, which means a spiritually transformative leader must be able to enlighten the peoples' spiritually. This is not limited to preaching, and witnessing to people about God, but also to model for and lead others in the congregation in acts of compassion, mercy and justice and pointing people in the direction of transformation of the community of faith as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ." They have been active in "developing their relationship with others as a way of nurturing people's relationship with God through Jesus Christ." They emphasized that their role is to "reach out to those people who have backslide in their faith, thus avoiding divisions and arguments, and encouraging others to adhere to God's commandments." They expressed, "understanding all of their roles mentioned above are very significant to their calling."

Furthermore, these Pacific Island leaders stated, "taking care of the facility and fixing whatever needs to be repaired, like fixing of the truss of the sanctuary, the social hall and other structures that need fixing were essential to the maintenance of the church." They mentioned

their active roles in a hands-on approach like prayer vigils for church families' funerals by their presence with the mourning families. They assert that "supporting one another in the Bible studies, and in upholding their religious belief in interpreting the Bible texts have encouraged them to seek God's will in a deeper level." In addition, they specified that they "are able to lead by example and they have the aptitude for networking ideas with the interests of people in the congregation."

**Question 4: What are some changes that you wanted the Pacific Island leaders to take in administering the St. Luke's UMC now and also in the future? Please explain your responses.**

Some of the changes that Pacific Island leaders wanted transformative leaders to take now and, in the future, are as follows. "A transformative leader should have some intellectual understanding about the finances of the church, understand common legal issues like taxes, signing forms and contracts and communicating with people who are lending the church funds for renovating the church." Most all of their responses were directed towards "a transformative leader is a person who is able to communicate effectively with other sectors in the local community. A transformative leader is a person who declares boldly and shows evidence that the Holy Spirit is working among the leaders."

Moreover, these Pacific Island leaders express another important concern about "having more church retreats and workshops so that the current leaders would understand their roles and responsibility at church." At the same time, the transformative leader should "train youth and young adults to be equipped with the right knowledge in the leadership of the church." Most of them said, that the youth and the young adolescents should be given opportunities in leading roles and to be more involved and active for they are the future leaders of St. Luke's UMC."

They said that young people “should be guided and encouraged to lead like Jesus.” Again, they expressed that there should be “more training for these young people to demonstrate Christ-like leadership skills and help recruit more members for St. Luke’s church.”

One of the changes that was recommended by these Pacific Island leaders is to “accommodate the devoted members expectations and keep the Bible study sessions going via zoom.” All these leaders asserted the “importance of nurturing the spiritual needs of the congregants even after the COVID 19 is over.” They noted that the “zoom sessions helped them as leaders to stay connected with church families.” It was also suggested that it is very important to “keep the phone lines alive because it connects the leaders with the elderly folks at church.” They claimed that “communication via zoom, phones, email, text have helped leaders to be informed about church events and stay connected with everyone about the church’s activities.” Most said, that caring ministry can strengthen the relationship between the laity and the rest of the congregation.”

**Question 5: What are some of the observable problems or obstacles that the Pacific Island leaders face at St. Luke’s UMC? Please explain these problems.**

One of the main problems that these Pacific Island leaders are concerned about is “language barriers. English is the main language of communication across all races and the multi-generation at St. Luke’s UMC.” It is difficult for some of these immigrant leaders to express their thoughts across to others in English. However, one leader said, “we persevere/endure with understanding, we love one another, and we understand what our fellow brothers and sisters are saying.”

There was a suggestion brought forth by these Pacific Island leaders to “recruit young adults and adolescents to interpret the Tongan messages clearly to non-Tongans.” “The second

generation (Pacific Island Americans) would do a great job in translating the ideas and thoughts of some of our current leaders so that others would understand. These younger generation were born here (US) and they are capable and have the talents for public speaking.”

One resource included the Bible studies conducted in Tongan on Wednesday night. The Tongan lay leaders said that “it is a good opportunity for our Tongan youth and adolescents to speak in Tongan and express their ideas about the Bible in the Tongan language.” This has helped some of them to learn Tongan and bridge the gap of the language barrier across the generations.” These Pacific Island leaders said, “learning the cultural values of language and knowing the language as their identity is very significant.” Some mentioned, “these young people are proud to learn to speak the Tongan language and express their thoughts in the Tongan language. This is an opportunity of learning for our younger generation. At the same time, they profess that “a dual learning process could take place, the immigrants can learn to say things in basic English, and the young adults and youth can have an opportunity to express their ideas in Tongan or Fijian.”

There was a concern about the style of worship. Some leaders mentioned, “we are mostly doing the traditional Wesleyan style of worship and this is a conflict with the younger people’s work schedule.” Some of the “youth and young adults are working, and they have to skip the rest of the service and leave for work.” Another suggestion they brought forward was “to include contemporary style of worship so that our young children, youth and young adolescents would stay engaged.”

Another major concern they raised is to “hire an English teacher who can teach our immigrant leaders about some important English skills.” They said “hiring an ESL teacher would help alleviate and eliminate the language barrier.” They wanted this idea to be implemented after

the COVID 19. Hence, most of them believe this idea “would improve the communication skills across the Pacific Island leaders and the European American members as well as the young people who were born here in the US.”

**Question 6: What are some strategies or methods that the Pacific Island leaders should acquire in operating the St. Luke’s UMC? Please explain your answers.**

Most of these Pacific Island leaders specified, a “spiritual transformative leader should be able to be a good team player. This means a leader need to show others how things are done and what needs to be done.” They declared that as leaders, they should “get people excited about the tasks allocated to them and be part of the team. Teamwork is very important because each one of these leaders know and understand their role and be accountable for their assigned roles. They are aware that they should be able to guide others about their eternal destiny.” These leaders stated that they “should always believe in the best in people, giving them the benefit of the doubt and gather all the facts before drawing conclusions.”

The leaders respond, mostly noting that a “leader’s personal life has to be consistent with his/her professional life.” They said, “people need to see leaders as credible people who do what they say, and say what they mean and communicate honestly, and are modest and humble in their service. In addition, they suggested that leaders “need to get out of their comfort zone and serve others at church and also in the community.” Moreover, they mentioned that leaders need to be “fair and transparent in their actions. This could add to the effectiveness of leadership in their personal and professional life.”

One of the strategies that these Pacific Island leaders posited is that they “need to acquire and hire a visionary and focused leader.” This would mean that the leader must be at the center. In this way, people would see from different angles and have a transparent view of the vision of

the leader. The leader must “continuously guide and point people to grow in their faith by participating in the spiritual programs like worship services, Bible studies, liturgists in the worship service, singing in the choir, participating in the outreach programs of the church, serve the elderly population in church and volunteering to feed the homeless.” These leaders emphasized that being a visionary leader “involves pointing and directing people in the way Jesus leads for He is the Way, Truth, and the Life.” Moreover, they said “to lead like Jesus is a servant-leadership model.” In addition, they added that a visionary leader “is a person who leads with confidence and delegates leadership roles to others.” For instance, a leader with “a clear vision must be easily understood, interpreted and achievable. This would motivate the members of the church to become active and engaged in the vision of the church.”

**Question #7: How can we improve the leadership skills of the Pacific Island leaders (both clergy and laity) in the United Methodist Denomination? Please explain your answers.**

One of the ways suggested by the Pacific Island leaders is to “develop credible people and practice to be role models as teachers and mentors.” They mentioned that “the way to become effective teachers and mentors involves team building and kingdom building.” Most of them elaborated that “developing the body of Christ in action, recognizing members of the church with diverse gifts, unified around a common purpose, and with each part contributing to the whole requires a team leader who can work collaboratively with the rest of the leadership team.” Hence, they speculated that “developing and then practicing these skills takes time, intentional effort, and patience.”

Moreover, they declared “that it takes pride to be a team member because each member is accountable for the outcome according to the vision set up by the team.” Most posited that “it brings enjoyment to see other team members and people in the congregation grow in their faith.”

These leaders ventured that it is also their goal “to keep everyone focused on the vision and strive to achieve the vision of the church.”

One remarkable way proposed by these Pacific Island leaders is to “have workshops, guest speakers, and training of the leaders and engaging all leaders in group activities that would highlight the goal and the vision of St. Luke’s UMC.” They said that part of the group activities is “to celebrate and recognize the success in some ways of the achieved goals.” Moreover, the participants in the workshops would have “to reflect and share the values of the church and enjoy their achievement.”

There was a recommendation from the Pacific Island leaders about “rotating of the leadership in different roles.” This relates to the chairperson’s rotations of their positions when they serve in different committees. They said that this is “a way of learning and gaining new opportunities to experience different roles each year or maybe after every three years serving.” Most of them mentioned that this is “like a refresher course and upgrading of leadership skills for every Pacific Island leader. Each leader should be aware of his/her job description.”

They suggested that one of the ways to improve leadership skills is to “translate the leadership materials into Fijian and Tongan languages. This would be easier for these Pacific Island leaders to learn and know the requirements in their native tongues.” Moreover, they expressed their need “to work on areas of weaknesses such as communication skills and pray about the improvements that are needed.” They believed that the translated materials would “enhance meaningful learning to take place.” They claim that using their native language would enable them to give meaningful testimonies to their fellow natives about making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. These Pacific Island leaders stated that they feel the support of their own native Islanders “when they communicate in their native language.”

**Question #8: The Pacific Island leaders are capable and have the potential for leadership in local UMC congregation. Can you suggest one or more skills that seemed to be lacking in our Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC?**

One of the skills that was lacking and suggested by all Pacific Island leaders is the “lack of English language communication skills. All of the important ideas that need to be relayed to the congregation has to be announced in English so that everyone understands what is going on.” Furthermore, these leaders stated that “the weekly Bible study on Monday and Wednesday done via zoom have been very helpful to learn the basic English language.” They mentioned that they “are learning quickly and are trying to speak the foreign language and they are doing great for English as a second language (ESL) speaker.”

Another skill that these Pacific Island leaders expressed that they are lacking is “adapting to the Western ways of leadership.” These Pacific Island leaders said they “are trying to cope by adapting and getting to be acclimated to the western ways of leadership.” At the same time, all these Pacific Island leaders mentioned, that “getting acquaintance with the values and culture of the US is sometimes difficult for them to cope with and adapt to.” They speculated that they are “trying to balance the two cultures (US and the Pacific Island cultures) at St. Luke’s UMC.” They have claimed that “adapting is slow, but they are definitely moving forward.” They claimed that there “are resources they need to tap into for assistance in their leadership roles.” Thus, this is tied to the adapting to the Western ways of leadership. They speculated that adapting to western culture “would be easier for our young adults and adolescents because they were born in the U.S. and this is a good fit for them.”

The lay leaders of St. Luke’s UMC said that “one of the skills that needs to be taught to the members of St. Luke’s church is contextualizing the Bible.” They expressed a need to

“interpret the ancient context of the Bible and see what they can apply to their present-day context.” Many declared that they “are traditionalists and interpret the Bible literally.” Thus, in our Bible studies, these leaders said, they have “learned so much about the history and the cultural background of some stories in the Bible” and they “have understood some of the ancient context of the Bible.” They have stated their own interpretation of those ancient contexts to their current context of living in the US. and its relevant meaning for them in their faith journey.

The Pacific Island leaders voiced the need to include “the youth and young adults in workshops and future trainings.” They believe that “the youth and young adults are the future leaders of St. Luke’s UMC.” Thus, they state that training “is a good opportunity to employ so that the young people in the church’s training can be familiarized with the UMC polity and its structure.” All emphasized that it is crucial “for young people to be active in the church’s training programs.”

**Question #9 Our tradition and culture do play significant roles in strengthening our Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke’s UMC. Can you name some of these traits that our Pacific Island leaders possess that empowers them in their roles? Please explain your responses.**

More than half of the leaders mentioned that one of the outstanding traits is being “respectful of others.” These leaders said that “being respectful of other cultures and other people have helped them to keep a healthy working relationship within the faith community as well as empowering them to sustain one another’s spiritual nourishment”. Most claimed that their “high respect for the members of the church is also blended with their humility and compassion for St. Luke’s UMC.”

The Pacific Island leaders mentioned that they “have learned to be God-fearing people and that with their rich culture and being embedded in Christianity, this trait is very crucial.”

They testify that they “put God first and then neighbors next.” Some stated that “fearing God first is of prime importance and thus, it is in their blood and bones.” Most said that “this cultural value has been passed on from their ancestors.” They highly respect pastors “for they symbolize God in their communities.” Some Tongan leaders recall that the “first fruit of their plantation is always given to the pastors as a symbol of serving God first before everyone else.”

All were eager to share that one of their traits is their “stewardship or their yearly tithing.” Many Pacific Island people in Tongan UMC churches throughout the US do their tithing once a year. Thus, when these Pacific Island people migrated to the US, they still keep this tradition of “saving every penny for their tithing for church.” This has a Biblical foundation and the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke’s UMC brought this tradition to the church. In Genesis 28: 20-22, it says “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, ‘If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and clothing to wear, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a pillar, shall be God’s house; and of all that you give me I will surely give one-tenth to you.’”

These Pacific Island leaders and the congregation profess that they have “saved much of their income and give it all for God’s ministry.” Many leaders are sharing more than a tenth of their earnings for God’s ministry. They said they are willing “to give all of their savings for the church.” They mentioned that some of their families are living in poor conditions. However, they are so “dedicated and are very generous to give what they have to God.”

Another trait that these Pacific Island leaders profess they have is that they are “very friendly and very compassionate to do God’s will.” Many posited they are very happy to meet and greet visitors when they come to church on Sunday. They expressed their concern about members who have been missing church for a while. They said they “are willing to reach out to

people.” As a practice of their sharing and caring for others, they profess they “like to check on others as a way of expressing their radical hospitality.” Some suggested that the visitation program is one way of “connecting with other members of the church.” One of the traits that these leaders mentioned is “to serve those who are in need in our church.” This means “being dedicated to serve the poor and the people on the margins, especially the undocumented in our midst.”

**Question #10: What does the definition of an inspirational leader in St. Luke’s UMC look like?**

Most of these Pacific Island leaders responded by saying that an inspirational leader is “a person who loves God first and loves his/her neighbor as himself/herself and has a good moral character.” Some elaborated on this statement by saying that an inspirational leader “has significant characteristics of a servant leader.” Thus, they listed these “Godly characteristics are love, joy, peace, hope, determination, integrity, compassion, patience, boldness, humility, and a servant-leader attitude.” Some said that this “leader has accepted Jesus Christ to be his/her Savior and loves God all the time. This leader who loves God will reflect the servanthood of Jesus Christ and possess a servant-leader attitude. This leader loves God and loves people as himself/herself.”

These Pacific Island leaders expressed that an inspirational leader is a person who is a “great communicator. This person speaks directly to the members’ needs.” This leader does not “let his position of authority make him/her feel better than others and does not have an inferior attitude of others.” This leader would “clearly communicate the needs of the church and others to the rest of church with no biases and no discrimination. This person would communicate and direct others to where people need help and praise, prayer, and consolation. This leader would

like fairness and treated people with compassion and open communication as always the key to understanding and always be transparent at all times.”

In addition, an inspirational leader is “a person who is discerning the leadership of the Holy Spirit all the time.” Such a leader will not “let his/her position of authority make him/her feel he/she is better than others.” “Being self-conscious of where you shine and where you are dimmed or weak” is a very important aspect of an inspirational leader. An inspirational leader is “a leader who listens to the leadership of the Holy Spirit.” Discerning the leadership of the Holy Spirit can “shine the light of acceptance so that sinners would come to repent their sins and understands the Word of God clearly.”

These Pacific Island leaders mentioned that an inspirational leader is a person who is a “servant-leader. Such a leader would “always love people” and “be very engaging in conversations and not judgmental.” This leader would “always boost self-esteem and make memorable compliments.” This leader would always “prepare to face any upcoming conflicts and teach the congregation to focus on Christ during such chaotic times.” Moreover, an inspirational leader is a person who “develops a good relationship with others and keeps a harmonious relationship amongst the members.”

## **The Second Workshop**

The second workshop went well, but only eight leaders attended the discussions and sent their responses to me. Four participants were busy working and were not able to send in their responses.

**Question #1 As leaders of the St. Luke’s UMC, can you suggest transformative ways so we could meet the needs of the St. Luke’s UMC?**

Most of the Pacific Island leaders recommended that the current Bible study sessions helped them “to lead with transformative mindset and attitudes.” These leaders feel this “is a great way to nourish their spirit to transform them spiritually.” They said that have learned “to listen deeply for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.” They have mentioned that some members of St. Luke’s UMC are eager to log in every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evening.

In addition, one of the leaders suggested to have “a more dedicated Bible study” and structure it so it can “highlight the mission of St. Luke’s.” The mission of the church is “To know Christ and make Christ known.” This leader’s response was to have a “deeper understanding of the mission and to have an everlasting effect in the leader’s mind.”

One of the concerns brought up by the leaders was about “conducting things in a transparent method.” They stated that it would help them “build compassionate relationships among themselves and trust one another because they all hear and learn and see how things are done, and what needs to be done.” This brought to the table the need to be “inclusive in decision making and be transparent about what was approved and the actions that needed to be carried out and not just a few leaders to make decisions in the matters of the church.” In addition, “transparency would include having an open dialogue with the congregation about what needs required urgent attention and when they are to be done. Transparency is a call for leaders to continue doing what works well and learn from the best outcome. Transparency requires all the leaders and the members of St. Luke’s UMC to continue the fellowship we have to empower one another.”

One of the recommendations made by all these leaders is “to include youth and young adults in future leadership trainings at church.” They stress that this would “make our youth and young adult feel responsible and would be accountable for the tasks assigned to them.” Having to

include them would mean they “would be more active, broaden their perspectives and what they are capable of and what they would bring to the table.” It is also an opportunity for them “to grow spiritually and give them space to learn.” They mentioned that leaders should remember that they “must work as a team and collaborate, network and do knowledge sharing as ways to empower one another.”

All the Pacific Island leaders said that “the method of Jesus Christ’s leadership is the most transformative method for all leaders at St. Luke’s UMC as well as any leader in the world.” Jesus emphasized his teaching about leadership, saying; “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his own life a ransom for many.”<sup>41</sup> The disciples may have remembered his teachings about leadership, as when he died, he physically sacrificed his own life for them and for the whole world. James and John’s request to be seated at the place of honor on Jesus’ right and left side made Jesus graciously affirm them by acknowledging that they will follow him down the path of costly discipleship that leads to eternal life. Jesus’ style of leadership conveyed a style of servanthood, and relationship. Grant Hagiya, in his book, *Spiritual Kaizen*, says “Effective leadership means one should change styles in order to match the context of the situation one faces.”<sup>42</sup>

Most of the Pacific Island leaders stated “transformational leadership originates from the One who transforms us and as leaders we never do the changing. We do not have the power of transformation.” From his own description he clarifies that transformation is a “calling and a work that is never fully finished.” The Apostle Paul said, “let us be God-centered and not human-centered.” In Colossians 3:2 he said, “Set your mind on things above and not on earthly

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<sup>41</sup> Matthew 20:28.

<sup>42</sup> Grant Hagiya, *Spiritual Kaizen*, 9.

things.”<sup>43</sup> “Do away with the old nature and the lies we have been told and put on the new self. It is the dying of the old self which is the result of his encounter with Christ that leads to transformation. Each leader must lose his/her old way of life and renew one’s mind and instill the love of Christ in one’s life.”

**Question #2: How can we go about achieving these transformative strategies now and the future?**

There was a general response from the Pacific Island leaders about rotating leadership roles within the church. They said this “would give other leaders an opportunity to experience different styles of leadership and also gain new knowledge about the committee he/she is in charge of.” These leaders expressed that this “could be a good work experience and gaining new perspective about taking charge of a new committee.” In the rotational phase of the leaders, the facilitator or the pastor must “have a dialogue with all the leaders and direct them to what is needed and required in operating as a new chairperson.” These leaders expressed their need “to know their job description and understand the requirement of each committee in the church.”

One of the ways of achieving transformative strategies suggested by these Pacific Island leaders is “holding trainings, workshops, and retreats in the future.” They mentioned the “inclusion of youth and adolescents is important because they are the future leaders of the church.” “We must acknowledge the presence of the youth and the adolescents in our midst.” In the training, these leaders suggested that we would include topics like “the doctrine of the church and the history of the church.” These leaders speculated that we should “hire tutors who would teach English to the immigrants at St. Luke’s UMC.” They also stated that the members of the church “should be informed about all the plans and purposes for the trainings, workshops and

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<sup>43</sup> Colossians 3:2.

retreats.” They proposed that within this plan for transformative strategies, “the facilitator should incorporate a user-friendly approach.” Moreover, the facilitator “must implement an action and continually monitor progress and appreciate the leader’s task as he/she leads others in that committee.”

One of the outreach purposes of St. Luke’s UMC Pacific Island leaders are to reach out to others. This includes those that are non-churched and invite them to join the church in our worship and fellowship times. These leaders believe that the reason for the invitation is “to reach out to those who live in the margin to come and know God as their Savior and Redeemer.” They said that the outreach would include “sending invitation, making a phone call, sending an email, and inviting people to join in our zoom Bible Studies.”

Moreover, these leaders claim that there is the significant effect of having to enter into a “continual life-changing work of the Holy Spirit.” They said that “transformation does not happen automatically or instantaneously. Transformation takes place when a person has accepted Jesus Christ as his/her Savior.” Also, entering and pursuing the Holy Spirit through a humble spirit and God will place his favor upon your life. These Pacific Island leaders said, “we are aware that God’s process at work is within each one of us.”

**Question # 3: Can you share your perspectives on how we find a smooth transition from our Pacific Island culture to the Western culture in being a transformative leader of St. Luke’s UMC?**

The majority of the leaders’ responses was “A transformative leader is a servant leader who will emulate the love of Christ through the transitions that are happening now and, in the generation, to come. Even though we come from different cultures, we are One in Christ. This

means that we will put our differences aside and find a common ground and share our values and our beliefs in the Lord Jesus Christ who binds us together as children of God.”

A few responded that we have to “relax and loosen some attachments of our Island cultures that might have hindered our progress into the western culture.” They believe that a smooth transition is “finding balance between the two cultures.” This means one must “judge for himself/herself what to keep and keep our identity and blend in with the western culture like an octopus. An octopus uses his camouflage skill techniques and adapts itself to the different depths of the ocean as it needs safety and security. Adapt while still an Islander. One way of loosening our Pacific cultures is to make sure that the transformative leader is able to fit all the pieces of the puzzle together so we can all have a harmonious relationship and have peace.”

Another way of a smooth transition mentioned by the Pacific Island leaders is a “clear and strong communication skill and remaining neutral in every transition that takes place. A Pacific Island leader needs to project his/her perspectives clearly and precisely and have a balanced view of every aspect in the church’s business and daily activity. A transformative leader must use his/her communication skills and explain the reasons for the changes making sure that everyone is on the same page. Moreover, these Pacific Island leaders said that a leader must use his/her communication skills and inform everyone about the changes pros and cons and have a discussion before anything else is implemented.”

One of the concerns raised by these Pacific Island leaders is to have educated leaders so “they can understand the two cultures clearly and how they function in different cultural contexts.” They said “we regard our culture as our identity.” They went on to stress that in the “Christian perspective, culture is paramount; the Bible is our manual, outlining our behavior and we frequently consult in the Bible as our guide.” Thus, these leaders believe that the

transformative Pacific Island leader must “assimilate the Western culture, the Pacific culture and the Kingdom culture and utilize the best for everyone.” An educated transformative leader would “uphold the changes that are helpful and inspiring to all the members of St. Luke’s UMC and just follow or monitor the changes taking place.”

**Question 4: About 99% of us are first generation immigrants. Hence, how would you, a transformative leader wants to be more involved in St. Luke’s UMC?**

A transformative leader is “always inspiring others and motivating others to do their best.” It is through inspiration and motivation that transformative leaders “have a solid understanding of the things to be done at church.” Being inspired and motivated, we as leaders “must share and accept our differences and learn from each other aiming at a peaceful result.” “Learning and being more responsive to the gifts and talents that each member brings to God’s ministry” is a true image of an inspiring and motivating leader.

One of the things that transformative leaders must have is “to be active and have a hands-on approach in church’s activities.” This is displayed through “compassionate relationship with one another” and following St. Luke’s mission, “Let us build a spiritual, compassionate relationship so we can support our leaders.”

These Pacific Island leaders stated that a transformative leader must “unite other people using his leadership skills and work together because one person cannot do it alone. Collaborative teamwork is essential for a successful leader.” They say that leaders “are blessed by God because they have great minds. They must execute responsibility and build up confidence amongst the team. The leader must build up the morale of the people in the congregation.”

**Question #5: Share one aspect or a vision you have for St. Luke's UMC that reflects transformative leadership. (I have included the vision I have developed for St. Luke's UMC. You can add your own vision if you want to).**

Half of the leaders suggested that “the youth and the young adolescents should be more active and engaged in church activities. They are the future of the church. They are like recipients of an heirloom that is passed down from generation to generation.” As transformative leaders these stated, “we must work together with the parents and guardians, elderly people and leaders must create an environment that our younger generation matters. In nurturing our youth and young adolescents we give them opportunities to grow spiritually. We also support them in their academic career and support them with their vision for a brighter future.”

Most of these leaders believe that “transformative leaders must do good, do no harm and stay in love with God. This is John Wesley’s life principles.” Some believe that a “transformative leader is a person who offers holistic support for everyone.” This would value “everyone’s opinion and envisioned the future with an optimistic view. This is doing good, doing no harm and staying in love with God.”

Most of the Pacific Island leaders said that a transformative leader “is a person who is open to new ideas which are beneficial to the church and also adapting to changes that are beneficial to the spiritual growth of everyone.” They proposed that we must also “encourage and inspire members to innovate new ways of nurturing the spiritual needs of other members.” Others said that transformative leaders “must inspire self-management and the ability to take the right risks, that is informed decisions from gathered information.”

### **The Third Workshop**

The third workshop was about “What every leader needs to know about leading meetings?” Nine Pacific Island leaders attending this workshop. Three leaders were working and were not able to attend. The method that I utilized for this workshop was sharing an outline on how to conduct a meeting followed by discussion. I also provided a sample agenda for a 90-minute meeting of the Administration Committee meeting.

Firstly, I introduced the five reasons for individuals who are chosen to have leadership positions: a) Some leaders know about the work the committee will do. b) Some are asked to serve because of their faithful commitment to the congregation. c) Some agreed to lead simply because the job needs to be done and no one else will do it. d) Some leaders emerge because of their professional and secular experience. e) Others emerge because their lives display the fruits of deep faith.

Secondly, the next headline in our group discussion was “The need for effective ministry leaders.” I provided them with the list of six factors that effective ministry leaders need: a) Effective ministry calls for leaders who combine both skills and faith. b) Effective ministry calls for spiritual leaders. c) Spiritual leaders are a life of growth. d) Spiritual leaders continually increase their practical leading while deepening their relationship with God. e) Spiritual leadership suggests that every leadership experience includes the possibility of life-changing transformation. f) Spiritual leadership expresses the hope that God’s transforming love will infuse individual lives, small groups, congregation, and the world. The Apostle Paul said, “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds...Let love be genuine.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Romans 12: 2, 9.

Thirdly, I offered them the purpose of this workshop, which was to guide the Pacific Island leaders about holding meaningful meetings and reminding them about their positions as chairpersons. They must be a spiritual leader. Thus, holding meetings are not simply a monthly routine to fulfill the requirements of the committee, but it is the coming together of Christians in a meaningful spiritual committee meeting. They must be more like Christ in their lives. They must pay attention to their lives as disciples of Christ. This would strengthen and enhance a work group because the members feel they are doing the work of God, rather than merely maintaining the institution. I also reminded the leaders that it is important to remember that faith formation and staying committed is part of their task.

The fourth factor was “What is the result the committee is looking for?” It is always a good idea to gather information about the task from the people who have done similar tasks in the past. The leaders must be aware of the expectations of the stakeholders in the ministry. When someone takes a position as a leader, that person should ask if the church has a job description for the position of leadership, he/she is taking, defined his/her task is remembering that he/she is leading the people of God in ministry, and remembering that he/she will need to work with other individuals of the committee and that maybe he/she will be involved in a local community.

Moreover, the leader must let the committee know that the name “leader” implies that someone is “following.” It is very important that the members of the committee that he/she is leading work together as a team. The leader must be able to think prayerfully about the people he/she leads in ministry. The leader must be mindful of the members of the committee. He/she must be conscious that each member brings a variety of skills, knowledge, and different perspectives that would help build up the kingdom of God on earth.

In planning the meeting, the spiritual leaders must understand the purpose of the meeting and establish ground rules by which team members will work together and practice accountability with one another. The spiritual leader is to pray for each member of the group and pray for God's direction. The leader sets the time and date for the meeting and is sure that everyone is present. In the meeting, the leader plans the agenda, making sure that the committee's purpose is accomplished and the tasks set up are done and by when and who will do those tasks.

The leader must set the ground rules before the meeting begins. There are established behaviors that the leader must acknowledge that are appropriate and acceptable and each committee member must abide with them. The ground rules are a) to speak the truth with love; speak directly to a person if there is a problem between them rather than talking with everyone else in the team. b) keep confidential what is shared in confidence. c) follow through with commitments that the committee made as a teamwork. d) respect one another's ideas and opinions. e) finally, hold one another in prayer for the committee's common work.

There will be procedures to ensure good use of the committee's time, following the agenda and making sure if there are projects to be done, he/she must set timelines for the projects. This will encompass making decisions within the team meetings and decisions must be by consensus, not outside of meetings with only one or two members. It is the responsibility of the leader to make sure each person has been heard. The leader must start the meeting on time and end on time. One of the things that a leader must pay attention to is to follow the agenda so that all the necessary work will be covered. The leader must make sure if there are projects to be done, he/she must set timelines for the projects and assign responsibility, so all members are clear on the tasks. The leader must set time aside for meditation and prayer for each meeting.

From my own personal experience, I would always start any meetings with reading the Scripture and followed by a brief devotion. At the end of the meeting, I would ask a member to send us off us forth with a prayer. Thus, all the current leaders are following this procedure. Begin and end any meeting with a short devotion and a prayer.

The sample meeting that I prepared was an Administration Board of Council meeting. All procedures of the meeting were done virtually. I informed the leadership team that this is just a sample meeting. The leader of the meeting can light a candle or call for a time of silence and begin with a prayer. I reminded each member that we are aware that the Holy Spirit is present with us. Hence, as each member shares it is with reverence and humility and we speak the truth with the love of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Hence, I put forward the agenda. First the secretary must read the minutes from the last meeting we had last month. I then ask for any corrections, amendments and then ask for any motion to approve the minutes. It must be seconded and then ask for a vote.

The next step is the Administration Council chairperson's report. This was followed by the same procedure and then each committee chairperson will give their individual report. When all the committee's reports were done, then the Administration Chairperson would make a clear evaluation of the meeting and acknowledge the work that has been accomplished by each committee. The chairperson would move to the next item on the agenda. The final item is the Chairperson's question, "What business do we consider next time?" And "How can we do our ministry better and more motivating?" After that discussion, then the chairperson would close the meeting with a prayer, then say the meeting is adjourned.

Another factor that I included in this simple workshop was, "How do we handle change and transform conflict?" The Bible talks about God's creative activity to bring change through

patterns of beginning and endings. In Isaiah 43:19, it says “I am to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you perceive it?” Change is a sign of life—every living thing is growing, learning, and adapting to the environment. Some changes are desirable, some changes are happening slowly, and we hardly notice them, some changes surprise us; and some changes are shockingly violent. As human beings we react to changes. Our responses to change are often emotional, ranging from joy and delight to grief, sorrow, fear, and anger. It is always the impact of change that will affect our relationships with one another. I concluded by reassuring my team members that change changes us. Change brings us new ideas, and new patterns of behavior.

I also informed the Pacific Island leaders that conflict can “lead the members of St. Luke’s UMC to transformation and would bring us closer to God and to each other.” We all have differences in opinions as a challenge and a disruption that makes us uncomfortable, and as an interruption to smooth-running meetings. Conflict is part of our relationship because God created each of us as unique humankind. This means each of us has different life experiences and different life skills and abilities. Our unique character and our various lifestyles mean that each of us has a different point of view. The role of a leader is to guide people to discern God’s direction, knowing when to hesitate and when to move ahead. Moreover, conflict is a means of transformation if we value our differences. Healthy conflict pushes us to depend on God for guidance, seeking God’s direction and relying on God to prompt us toward the right path and do the right actions. In dealing with conflict, it is always necessary to get yourself grounded and stay calm. Listen intently to the other person’s point of view, listen for facts, and listen with a loving heart. Gather all the information and have a dialogue. Both you and the other person must agree to disagree and do all the resolving with a positive attitude and a respectful tone of voice in your dialogue.

## The Bible Study Sessions

There was a slight change during the weekly Bible studies I led. Pre-COVID 19 scheduled the Bible study twice a week. I conducted the Bible study every Monday in the Church Hall and every Thursday night at a Fijian home. However, with the spread of the coronavirus our facility was shut down. I had to figure out ways to meet and keep our congregation stable during this unprecedented time. Hence, we were adapting very swiftly to meet the spiritual needs of the congregation and to accomplish the purposes of my research project. I change the schedule of the Bible studies to every Monday, Wednesday and Friday evenings from 7:00p.m.- 8:00p.m./8:30p.m. via zoom.

Thus, it was one way to equip these leaders to become spiritually confident and transformative and effective leaders, let alone be familiar with *John Wesley's Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living*. These rules are 1) Do no harm. 2) Do good. 3) Stay in love with God. In this context, Ruben P. Job asserts, “practicing these three simple rules would result in transforming way of living, thus strengthening of the bond that binds us to God.”<sup>45</sup>

At the opening of our Bible studies, I used John Wesley's three simple rules and added more specific questions, which were relevant to the Scripture we were studying. These check-in questions included: 1) How is it with your soul? 2) What is an image, a theme, an idea, a phrase, a lesson that appeals to you in the text? 3) What is God's nudge for you in this passage? These are the guideline questions for every Bible study session. I am expounding the Holy Conferencing method for the Bible study sessions because it is interactive, and we affirm one another as a way of empowering each other's faith and encourage one another in their faith

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<sup>45</sup> Ruben P. Job, *Three Simple Rules: A Wesleyan Way of Living* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), 66.

journey. The Apostle Paul consented, “and what you have heard from me through many witnesses entrust to faithful people who will be able to teach others as well.”<sup>46</sup>

I always hold the Monday Bible study in English. The leaders have watched me conduct the Bible study, so I delegated the Wednesday Bible studies to the Tongan leaders and their small Wesleyan class. I delegated the Friday night Bible study to the Fijian leaders and their small Wesleyan class. All twelve leaders who joined this research project participated in leading all the Bible study sessions. I observed that they are confident to testify about their faith and their spiritual growth is apparent. They have become more knowledgeable about the Bible. I affirm that they are spiritually transformed by the constant nourishment of their spirit every week.

I employed the Holy Conferencing Bible study for more than three years. The Holy Conferencing is done by mutual invitation. Mutual invitation is led by the leader who shares about the text and then invites the next person to share. If that person is not ready to share, she/he can say “pass” and invite someone to share. However, eventually everyone in the group will share about the text or say a few words about their faith journey. Everyone is included in the Holy Conferencing Bible study.

First, I said a prayer, then ask for three volunteers to read the Bible aloud before we start sharing. This is very motivating. My research team as well as volunteers have requested if they could lead the Bible study. The Holy Conferencing is one of the effective tools that I have used for nourishing the souls of these leaders as well as the congregation. They have shared eagerly their spiritual experiences and their spiritual discipline practices. The common pattern is to pray first, then read the Scripture three times with three different readers, then share using mutual invitation. This is very engaging because all the members who are present are not shy to share.

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<sup>46</sup> 2 Timothy 2:2.

Sometimes, some of the members of the congregation would tell the truth that they have not read the Scripture. However, they are willing to share “How is it with their soul? Any good deeds done this week? Are you staying in love with God?” The truth of the matter is the leaders as well as the members are speaking the truth and are confident to share their faith on God.

The Bible study sessions are helpful tools for these leaders to grow spiritually and be able to direct other followers to God. Each of these leaders can speak publicly about their faith. They have also gained skills in conducting Bible Study using Holy Conferencing. Leading and attending the Bible study sessions is pivotal to these leaders’ spiritual formation and their faith-sharing and proclaiming God’s love, grace and mercy to all members. These leaders are confident to lead new people, pointing them to the grace and love of God, seek the lost, welcome the strangers to our Bible study sessions and stay in love with God. We have had many newcomers joining us for our zoom Bible studies every Monday and Friday nights.

**The Responses from other Clergy members, two District Superintendents and Lay people (First Workshop).**

I am deeply humbled to receive responses from other Tongan clergy members, two European American District Superintendents, a Tongan Deacon and the first Tongan assistant lay leader for the California-Nevada UMC Conference. These clergy members are serving in other Pacific Island UMC congregations in the California-Nevada Conference of the UMC. The purpose of my reaching out is to receive holistic perspectives from my fellow co-pastors, who are serving in Tongans and Fijians congregations. Two of these clergy are serving in a diverse church with European Americans, Tongan Americans, and Filipino Americans. Eleven clergy answered they questionnaires, including: nine Tongan clergy, one Fijian clergy, one European

American clergy. I also reached out to one Deacon and the assistant Lay leader for the California-Nevada Conference. Both of whom are Tongans.

**Question #1: What kind of Pacific Island leaders do you recommend for any local UMC in the future?**

Two clergy responded by saying they “would prefer having a clergy to serve,” three clergy recommended both clergy and laity. The lay leader suggested “a clergy depending on the size of the congregation.” She mentioned “if it is a small rural church, then an option would be a certified lay minister.” The rest of the responses highlighted clergy/leaders who are ready to serve God, God-fearing leaders, those who are obedient to do the will of God and to serve the people of the local church. Most of the responses mentioned that clergy “have a strong faith and have developed a personal relationship with Jesus Christ to live out their faith.” A clergy is “spiritual and able to lead with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.”

There were a couple of clergy members who recommended a clergy/leader who is well-educated and understands the Tongan cultural context and the European American context. These clergy stated that it is “crucial that such a clergy must be able to speak and write in both Tongan/Fijian/Filipino/and English languages fluently.” This clergy should be able “to adapt to the two cultures smoothly and connect with the younger generation who were born here.” Moreover, this clergy “should be aware of the social struggles of the members and know where to direct them to the right resources for assistance.” This clergy “should be able to connect with all age groups, including the elderly who were born and migrated from the Pacific Islands and move here to the U.S. Also connect with the youth, young adolescents and children who were born here in the U.S.”

Some clergy responded by saying that clergy “should have the respect of the congregation and serve like a servant-leader.” As a Pacific Island clergy, respect is “automatically given to the clergy once he/she is ordained.” The clergy members serving in the UMC congregations “should earn the respect of their flock and serve passionately when he/she earned the respect from the members of the congregation.” This leads to the affirmation of the clergy’s “relationship with God as he/she displays the servant-relationship in life and ministry.”

Some clergy members responded, suggesting that “clergy members should have an in-depth knowledge about the structure and the polity of the UMC. As much as graduate or post graduate studies are important, the nuts and bolts of ministry is also very crucial.” If the Pacific Island leaders are not aware or have good knowledge or rapport, this leader “is inviting disaster to happen.” The Book of Discipline is “our laws, plan, polity, and the process by which the United Methodists govern themselves remains constant.” However, if the clergy is “knowledgeable about the UMC Discipline and the structure of the church, then this can help produce fruitful and sustainable ministry in a vast context.”

**Question #2: What are some of the qualities of the Pacific Island leaders that would initiate transformational change in any local UMC?**

Most of the clergy responses included “a leader who is a faithful disciple of the God and has a strong prayer life and he/she is spiritually mature, and dedicated, grace-filled and grace-full Christian.” All clergy responded saying “a leader who is God-fearing and is willing to participate actively in church activities with perseverance, unconditional love, and being able to apply Biblical principles to his life as well as the church. This leader must pray consistently and studies the Scripture daily. A clergy who is willing to nurture the spirits of the members of the church

and work collaboratively with other members of the congregation. This leader must develop a close relationship with God and with the people he/she serves.”

A leader who is “visionary and strategic uses teamwork in projecting a larger dream for the congregation. This leader must be resourceful, and he/she knows where to reach out for help for the members of the church. He/she must get the best practices and incorporate them for the needs of the members of the church. This leader must recognize the gifts other people have and utilize them effectively and work as a team in achieving the goals of the leader and the church.”

A leader who is “relational, compassionate, possesses a servanthood attitude and walks humbly with the rest of the congregation, serving them with love and grace. A relational leader is a person who would listen with his/her heart, and build relationship within the church, advocate for peace and justice, trust, morale, inclusive and encourage living in harmony with everyone else. A relational leader is a person who is willing to minister to the poor and proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. This leader must have the ability to restore the brokenness in the congregation as well as those living in the margins. A leader who has included all people from different walks of life like the strangers, homeless, LGBTQ, the widows, orphans, destitute, and the poor.”

A leader who can “connect with the community and offer services like distributing food for the poor and the needy, feeding the homeless, and serving those who are in dire need in the church as well as those in the community. This person has to display Christ-like traits and minister with unselfish means.”

A leader who “gives generously in the church’s annual tithing. Stewardship is vital to the life of the Pacific Island leaders. When it is time for the annual tithing in the churches, most of the elderly people would save every single cent to give for God’s ministry. Thus, a church would

need a leader who sets an example for stewardship for the rest of the congregation. Giving is part of the Pacific Island traditions and this was an influence of the early missionaries. My ancestors give all the best for the ministry of God, in terms of tithing and also the first fruit of their plantations and livestock.”

A leader who is “not afraid of change. This person would try new things and embrace change and be open-minded. This leader would be willing to challenge the old assumptions of doing things the same way all the time and be able to do things in a new way. In other words, this is a progressive leader.” A leader who “welcomes the different cultures and be able to adapt and accept new ways. Ethnically different congregations have different needs. Thus, we need a leader who can adapt both cultures and cope with the different needs of the church.”

**Question #3: What are the roles of the current Pacific Island leaders in your congregation?**

The roles of the Pacific Island leaders are that they hold the key positions in the church. They are the lay leaders, lay preachers, certified lay speakers, treasurers, finance secretary, membership secretary, director for Youth, director for choir, director of the Sunday School, Chairpersons of the Administration Board of Council, Chairperson of Finance, Staff Parish Relations Committee, Outreach Committee, Communications Committee, Nominations and Development Committee, Worship Committee and Women’s and Men’s groups. These churches are all Pacific Island congregations.

**Question #4: What are some changes that you as a Senior Pastor wanted the Pacific Island leaders to take in administering your local congregation?**

Some suggested that they “would be creating a covenant group for all the leaders to meet regularly via zoom. We would decide how often we will meet- weekly, bi-weekly or monthly for prayer and fellowship. The purpose of this covenant group is to strengthen trust and respect

among each other and encourage the leader to pray for the work of the church and pray for all the leaders. Thus, in our covenant group, we would stay in communication with each other regarding all things that will be done through our covenant meeting times. The agenda would include such ideas as updating the church's websites, social media footprint and engagement.”

One clergy strongly suggested that “workshops and training are necessary.” This leader feels that “most of our Pacific Island leaders and members are not knowledgeable or trained in how a local church function. Training is key. Also include young people to lead and join these church workshops and training.” Martin Luther King Jr. said, “Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.”

One clergy recommends “a review of Administrative matters, and more training and workshops to address the needs of the congregation.” As a senior Pastor “we must keep an updated version of the requirement for the church’s needs. This part of the training would initiate the senior Pastor to do a skill assessment of the Pacific Island leaders of each church. The Senior Pastor would encourage the Pacific Island leaders to be active in the UMC Conference training as a way of broadening their perspective on administrative knowledge and skills.”

In addition, the senior pastor “would set up a discipleship program and outreach ministry for the small groups. This would foster developing a deeper, more meaningful discipleship and outreach ministry for both laity and other members to stay engaged. This would mean having these small groups do an outreach program such as reaching the neighborhood and serving the needy in the local community and focus on non-Pacific Islanders who need help.” One clergy mentioned that “the outreach mission of the church needs to be re-evaluated. The propellers of our church’s outreach ministries need to be changed. For instance, we do not need to “pick and choose,” which job is to be done and when it is to be done. This would weaken the mission of the

church. Moreover, with this kind of attitude this would dishearten the members of the church to serve the poor and the marginalized. Thus, the church may not serve God and love God whole heartedly. Outreach ministry needs to be practiced with genuine love and humility.”

Furthermore, as a senior Pastor, one recommends “moving toward the UMC way of doing things and gradually shifting away from the Tongan Free Wesleyan way of doing things. This will not be easy, and it will take many years of small gradual change. However, the subsequent generations who will be living in a completely UMC context will be grateful.” Another way of changing is to have leaders “be passionate about their roles for God and God’s people.” Moreover, another clergy said, “have a variety of worship styles like welcoming contemporary worship styles which would fit the need of the young adults and youth in the church.”

One clergy recommends that as a Pacific Island leader, “one must have a mindset to serve God. There are some Pacific Island leaders who are too arrogant and proud of their heritage and they neglect serving and becoming a disciple of Christ. Some of the Pacific Island leaders have forgotten they are servants of God and need to serve with humility.”

One senior Pastor said, he would “love to have more women and young adults serve in committees in the local church.” And he proposed that “we must allow women to be active in the operation of our churches, and that young adults are the future leaders of these Pacific Island UMC congregations.”

**Question #5: What are some of the observable problems or obstacles that the Pacific Island leaders face in your local congregation?**

One senior Pastor stated “when a leader takes things too personally and lets feelings get in the way of God’s work. A leader needs to have training in conflict- resolution and not develop

personal grudges within himself or herself. The Pacific Island leaders need “to deal with toxic members of the church in a professional way.” This is a very difficult problem when everyone is related then, it is difficult to deal with such problems. Many Pacific Islands live in extended family system. Thus, everyone knows their relatives and mostly everyone is related to everyone else, either by blood or by marriage. It is best to deal with these problems “as soon as they arise.” Moreover, a clergy/leader needs “to take care of his/her health and not get burned out by these problems and twenty-four-hour calls of the parishioners.” The pastor “must let the members of the church know when his time off is and be strict about these calls.”

Another idea that came across from many clergy was “keeping the confidentiality of conversations, and other related matters. People place their trust in leaders who should be held accountable to keep what is confidential, confidential and value the trust being placed in them.” Leaders should be able “to direct people or members of the church to professional services when it is required.”

One of the observable problems are leaders “sometimes trying to control things instead of using a more collaborative style of leadership.” The leaders are “sometimes disrespecting young leaders as ill-equipped verses mentoring and coaching.” Some of the leadership skills are lacking for instance, “they do not have the proper administrative skills and thus tend to procrastinate completing church duties because the leaders do not know the channel of communication and what is required of them.” Some leaders “would not admit they are wrong, but the wanted to be right all the time.” Some of the older leaders “do not want to pass on the leadership roles to the younger people in the church.” This is holding on to power in a cultural perspective.

Another obvious problem is “lack of formal education from these leaders. Some of the immigrant leaders cannot speak English and cannot read and communicate in English. This is a major problem for most of the meetings with higher authorities are conducted in English.”

There is also another problem in that “people lack the knowledge of how to preside over meetings, read the job descriptions for their role and really know what they must do.” These leaders may not “be able to fulfil their roles required by the Conference, fill out forms for the Conference, or even writing minutes of important meetings.” “Language barriers” also play a major part in the lack of knowledge. One of the suggested remedies from this pastor is “to hold trainings and use young adolescents who can teach these older folks about administrative skills.”

Another observable problem mentioned by another clergy is “sharing facilities.” The European Americans always “claim that they own the property.” This is a big problem for the Pacific Island leaders. The Pacific Island people in the congregation “feel discouraged, discriminated, treated unfairly and have witnessed the prejudice being directed toward them in their fellowship time.” Some of these Pacific Island leaders draw conclusions about “politics, racism, and these European American pioneers may not want to share the Table of God’s love, grace and peace with everyone else.”

There is another major systemic problem that stands out. One clergy mentioned that “Pacific Island leaders have no knowledge about the polity and history of the UMC and also the denomination structure of the UMC.” Similarly, “there is a need for a Tongan translator or interpreter for the Book of Discipline so that the leaders and the members of the congregation can know the requirements and abide by the discipline of the UMC.”

**Question #6: What are some strategies that Pacific Island leaders should acquire in operating your local congregation?**

Most clergy responded saying that there “should be an on-going leaders’ training for all committee leaders and members. In the training all leaders are to be reminded that each one of them is accountable to carry out all duties. In the training, the new members must shadow the old members. This training should take place when the new members come into office. The old leaders must teach and pass on the knowledge to the new leaders. Moreover, it is pivotal to have training on money management, and accounting of the church’s income and outgoing money in paying the bills.”

Most of these clergy stated that there “is a need for continuous leadership training and coaching of members taking place. This training would be beneficial for each church to find out the gifts people have. The leaders must recruit younger people in the training and coaching. Trust and delegation of team leadership are important elements in the training.”

Most clergy claim that the church leaders “must have a clear vision and it must be an achievable vision. With the vision, the church must also have a mission. The mission statement is the overarching frame of the church to guide and maintain the faith of the leaders and the members of the church.” One clergy added that “each leader must bear in mind the core values and the goals for the church. Thus, the vision, the mission and the core values and goals work together for the coherent leadership roles of any UMC church.”

Some of the clergy speculated that one of the strategies that leaders would acquire is “using resources that are feasible within the context of the church.” The leader can “utilize all resources and gifts from all leaders and aim at building the Kingdom of God and empower each other as the body of Christ. The resources from women as well as youth and young adults would add to the richness of experience of grace and love within the church. Moreover, the resources available from the Conference center is available for any leader who would use them.”

One of the required strategies mentioned by some of these clergy is “building a good relationship with God and other members of the church.” The Biblical application of good relationship would be a key “to empower one another in faith-sharing testimonies.” Creating and forming small Bible groups or Wesleyan small classes is part of building relationships with other members in the church, drawing them closer to one another.

**Question #7: How can you/we improve leadership skills of both clergy and laity in the UM Denomination?**

We must have “consistent district and conference training and workshops offered for both clergy and laity. With training comes clear communication, of the purpose. If possible, it would be more meaningful if the materials are translated to our native tongue. We could have guest speakers who would share their knowledge and skills, and experience about the system and the structure of the UMC denomination. The training would also encompass assigning spiritual directors and mentors to both clergy and laity.” This is a useful resource, so these leaders are “well-equipped with the discernment of their spirit and acquiring wisdom when difficult issues arise in the church. This is a required leadership skill that is needed for all leaders.” The training of both clergy and laity would include “having a retreat for all Pacific Island clergy and laity to share the knowledge and skills.” It was strongly suggested that “the older clergy can share their knowledge in ministry with the new clergy and new laity. The clergy and laity are encouraged to participate in all virtual training via zoom and webinars, seminars, and lectures.” There was a recommendation from some clergy that “we must replace the leaders that are not active and are not willing to learn and participate in workshops, training, seminars, and retreats.”

There is a need for both clergy and laity “to be conscious of learning and adapting to new cultures and traditions and respect the values of other races within the church.”

**Question #8: Can you suggest any skills that seemed to be lacking in our Pacific Island leaders in your local congregation?**

The clergy proposed some skills that were lacking in many Pacific Island leaders. They said that Pacific Island leaders “lack strong administration skills, financial acumen to help members with budgeting, and to develop financial growth and estate planning. There is lack in participation of leaders regarding the administration training held by the Conference.”

The clergy have projected that there is “a need for cross-generational and cross-cultural workshops. This would urge leaders to build bridges between the local UMC congregations and build a bridge that connect leaders with the Conference. The leaders are to be aware of their roles as they guide, sustain, and empower younger generations to be future leaders of the local UMC congregations.”

The leaders need “to use Holy Conferencing in which they agree to disagree. This is a good medium of connecting and discussing with other members the needs of the church via zoom. During the Holy Conferencing, the leaders would discuss topics that could connect them to each other and be inclusive to others. They would share their burdens of responsibility, and in their discussions restore relationships.”

One of the skills that seemed to be lacking among Pacific Island leaders are the technological skills and using of computers, laptops, iPad, phones and other devices for communication purposes. The older generations “need to be taught how to use the phone in simple ways like texting, emailing and video calls and chatting on the internet.” In addition, “being able to overcome the language barrier” is a skill that is lacking among Pacific Island leaders and members of the Pacific Island churches.

**Question #9 Can you name some of the traits that our Pacific Island leaders possess that empowers them in their roles?**

All clergy have speculated that the Pacific Island leaders “are very compassionate, committed, trustworthy, respectful, generous, and faithful. They always place God first and next is family and then self. They are strong spiritual leaders and have dedicated their lives to God’s ministry and have treasured family’s values. They share what little they have with extended family members and are very caring about them and church families. They are very generous and hospitable to church families and serve the poor and the homeless in the community. The Pacific Island leaders are very compassionate and have empathy for the poor and the destitute.”

Some of the traits that the Pacific Island leaders bring to God’s ministry is “humility and a deep joy in their celebrations of church tithing and other festive seasons. They love feasting and dancing and this is part of their culture.”

The Pacific Island leaders are “God-fearing people, knowing and respecting the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, and Omniscient God. They placed their trust in God and they are very optimistic in their perspective dedicating their lives for a future full of hope.”

**Question #10: How would you define an inspirational Pacific Island leader in your congregation?**

These are some of the responses from all the clergy. An inspirational Pacific Island leader is a “person who leads by example. He/she is a leader whose life is Christ-like in words and in deeds. A leader who is God-fearing and able to place Christ in the center of everything. A leader who models being a servant leader and has a sacrificial heart with his/her main goal being to serve the Lord with all his heart, soul and mind. A person who leads by faith and is knowledgeable of the issues faced by the people in the church. A leader who has an intimate

relationship with God. He/she is very passionate and has developed a strong, unconquerable disciplined faith and is committed to Christ. Everything is focused on God.” Some of the Pacific Island leaders in most Pacific Island congregation “are eager to serve in the centers for the homeless, some are working in nursing homes and serve as the hands, feet and voice of Jesus in their workplaces.”

An inspirational leader is a person who “understands the Pacific Island context. He/she is visionary leader and motivates others to bring relevant changes to the body of Christ. He/she can adapt to the new culture in our midst. This leader is a people person, and he/she leads with a loving heart. This leader’s main goal is to point and lead people to Eternity. This leader leads with humility, authentic love and is curious and not afraid.

## CHAPTER THREE: Analysis of the First Workshop

After analyzing the leader's responses, I affirm that a spiritual transformative leader is a person who "leads with a compassionate heart, has skills, and has already displayed the fruits of deep faith." These are leaders who lead aiming for life being transformed and the leaders who are doing the ministry of God with life-giving measures. My team's responses have embraced all the aspects of a spiritual transformative leadership.

Betsy Heavner and Michael A. Bealla, in *The Booklet of Discipleship Resources*, state "Spiritual leadership is a life of growth. Spiritual leaders continually increase their practical leading skills while deepening their relationship with God."<sup>47</sup> People will watch to see if you live and lead according to the beliefs you profess, and Christ is counting on you to do so. Spiritual leaders are Christ's spokespersons. "We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us."<sup>48</sup> These two authors remind leaders "spiritual leadership expresses the hope that God's transforming love will infuse individual lives, small groups, congregations and the world."<sup>49</sup>

It is clear that the responses from the first workshop touched base with all the essential elements of a spiritually transformative leader of the St. Luke's UMC. The team's responses remind all the current and future leaders that spiritually transformative leaders are called by God to do his will and carry out his mission. It is not voluntary work, but, rather, a response to God's call and a covenant that bonds them to God and the community of faith.

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<sup>47</sup> Betsy Heavner and Michael A. Bealla, *What Every Leader Needs to Know About Spiritual Leadership*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> 2 Corinthians 5:20.

<sup>49</sup> Betsy Heavner and Michael A. Bealla, *What Every Leader Needs to Know About Spiritual Leadership*, 6.

Moreover, the leader must be faithful, for he is serving an Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient God. Hence, the trust of the people and the community is placed in his/her leadership. Being a leader is sometimes challenging, but it is a life-changing and faith-forming path to both the leader and the community of faith.

Leaders are required to live a prayerful and spiritual discernment of their call from God. Charles M. Olsen and Ellen Morseth's book, *Selecting Church Leaders: A Practice in Spiritual Discernment*, emphasize, "In spiritual discernment we seek to bring God's ways and our way into congruence...We will want to embrace those spiritual practices that open us to the mystery and presence of God: attending to the witness of Scripture, quieting ourselves in solitude and silence, relinquishing ego and the need to prevail, and offering ourselves in worship."<sup>50</sup> Spiritual transformative leaders must place God in the center of their leadership and focus everything on God through prayer, reading the Bible, dedication in seeking the will of God through fasting and fervent fellowship with other believers.

### **Analysis of the Second Workshop**

In analyzing the leaders' second workshop, it serves as a very useful resource for current and future leaders in St. Luke's UMC and any other Pacific Islander UMC congregation. Drawing from the leaders' responses, a spiritually transformative leader is a person of sound character who generates trust in their followers. This leader is a people person, who identifies with problems that other people have experienced in the congregation. In the book, *Effective Leadership in the Church* by Duane Kelderman, Duane Visser, Norm Thomasma and Dan Vander Ark, they claimed "Christian leaders have conviction which must be shaped by the

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<sup>50</sup> Charles M. Olsen and Ellen Morseth, *Selecting Church Leaders: A Practice in Spiritual Discernment*, 13.

Biblical vision of the kingdom of God. Effective Christian leaders must be invigorated by a vision of the Kingdom of God established in the world. These convictions arise out of the leaders' relationship with God in Christ and the Holy Spirit, and God's call to follow in faith and obedience.<sup>51</sup> Hence, the conviction of Christian and Spiritual Transformative leaders in the church should be a combination of Biblical, pastoral and theological beliefs of the Christian faith and church. Effective leaders "think deeply, theologically, integratively and creatively."<sup>52</sup>

### **Analysis of the Third Workshop**

The leaders participated in an informative workshop. I shared a hand-out with leaders concerning "What every leader needs to know about leading meetings." The leaders were able to understand more about the procedures of leading a meeting. Each meeting should have an agenda, have a clear purpose, get the job description for the role of a chairperson for all committees, set ground rules, list the work that needs to be accomplished or already has been accomplished, and clear discussions of the motions should be brought to the table. Decision-making should be by consensus. Everyone must keep confidential matters that arise. The church is the body of Christ. Being a leader on a committee would help a leader to grow in faith in his personal relationship with God. At the same time, a spiritually transformative leader would have a covenant with God in redeeming and reconciling with the world. The diversity in our churches and the communities may help reflect the leaders' formation of faith and guide the leader as he/she disciplines others to Christ. It will also encourage a leader to be responsible for the

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<sup>51</sup> Duane Kelderman, Duane Visser, Norm Thomasma and Dan Vander Ark, *Effective Leadership in the Church* (Michigan: Lexington, 2005), 22.

<sup>52</sup> Duane Kelderman, Duane Visser, Norm Thomasma and Dan Vander Ark, *Effective Leadership in the Church*, 22.

business of the committee's purpose and also be responsible for the spiritual formation of the members of the committee.

### **Analysis of the Bible Studies**

I have noticed my leaders' growth in their spiritual leadership, especially in conducting weekly Bible study sessions. At the beginning of the year, they were taking baby steps. As we proceeded to continue weekly Bible studies via zoom, these leaders were motivated and eager to lead the Bible study every Wednesday and Friday evening. When they conducted the Bible studies, I witnessed joy in their sharing. They explained the context of the Bible stories and how it applies to their faith journey. This Holy Conferencing Bible study has empowered each leader to grow stronger in their faith and their desires to live a life of Jesus' disciples.

I am intrigued by John C. Maxwell's idea, in his book, *LeaderShift*, where he mentions "Goals helped me to do better. But Growth helped me to become better." The significant quality of successful leadership begins with having a positive attitude. The second characteristics of successful leaders is the ability to develop a strong relationship with co-workers, people in church and in the community. These two elements of having a positive attitude and building a strong relationship are vital to successful leadership. Maxwell continues, "achieving a goal had opened the door to the opportunity, but my on-going ability to train others and develop my career as a trainer and speaker came as the fruit of my personal growth."<sup>53</sup> The growth is an on-going process as these Pacific Island leaders experienced their spiritual discipline in the grace of Jesus Christ who will provide firm foundation in their spiritual growth.

### **Some Required Skills for Pacific Island Leaders at St. Luke's UMC**

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<sup>53</sup> John C. Maxwell, *LeaderShift*, 43.

These Pacific Island leaders face two dilemmas. Firstly, they need to delve more deeply into their spiritual Christian faith. This would reflect clearly on what a spiritually transformative leader would look like at St. Luke's UMC or any other UMC churches. I affirm what Michael A. Bealla describes in *What every leader needs to know about spiritual leadership* that for a leader to "have a strong relationship with God in Christ is essential."<sup>54</sup> Moreover, John C. Maxwell, in his book, *LeaderShift* highlights four areas that would constitute a transformative leader, including: "relationship, equipping, attitude, and leadership." Throughout the workshops and meetings, I led, I was attempting to reveal on all four area of leadership. I know that leadership is all about forward movement.

The second dilemma is presiding over a meeting, having to know the procedures and rules of meetings. This is a technical part that some Pacific Island leaders lack and they need to gain the proper knowledge about ways of conducting meetings. They attended some local district training. They learned more about their leadership roles and ways to improve in conducting church meetings. according to the western style. This is the most convenient style as it suits the setting of our multi-cultural setting. When these Pacific Island leaders attend the Annual California Nevada Conference of the UMC, they have observed the practical procedures of conducting a meeting. Moreover, it is useful to learn and watch how meetings are held at the Conference level. Some of Pacific Island leaders in St. Luke's attempted to preside over meetings and are making slow progress in conducting meetings. I am certain that one day their practice in presiding over meetings will become more perfect.

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<sup>54</sup> Betsy Heavner and Michael A. Bealla, *What Every Leader Needs to Know About Spiritual Leadership*, 20.

The workshops helped Pacific Island leaders echo the significant aspect of dwelling on the spiritually transformative dimension of each individual leader. They prove that their lives must be rooted in the grace and love of Christ. Such proof is reflected in their serving produce and delivering food to the elderly members of St. Luke's during COVID-19. They navigated through their own cultural concepts and understand that Jesus Christ is the head of the church. They resonate with the message that their theology of interconnectedness, reciprocity and mutuality is significant as they gather for fellowship services. The weekly Bible studies and their personal reflections about their faith journey are more than a Sunday affair. The leadership roles of the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's promote the growth of the body of Christ. They grow in love, receive the love of God, and then give their life back to God to their needy co-worshippers and to the cry of the needy in the neighbors.

These Pacific Island leaders are committed and offer their grace as a gift to the whole Church and the local community. This is significant as I observe their annual tithing. They are not rich and, yet, they give abundantly out of their meagre resources. However, this is their manifestation of their living theology. They envision the sacrificial Christ-love on the cross and through the pain on the cross, they dedicate their tithing with strong faith that God will take care of them. In return, they seek to take care of the others in the community of faith. These Pacific Island leaders want to stay connected with one another as the church is the body of Christ. They tithe, knowing that there is nothing left for tomorrow, yet they still give so that their fellow worshippers might benefit.

In 2008, the Pacific Islanders Comprehensive Plan for Ministry study submitted their petition to the General Conference asking for funding and administrative oversight from the General Board for Global Ministries. This funding would strengthen Pacific Islanders to grow

their ministries in preaching and making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. Thus, as the authors of the article, *Pacific Island Ministry Plan*, state, “Pacific Island Christians truly believe that their identity, culture, and religious heritage, indeed, their way of life, is good and is where God is present and is at work. As a result, Pacific Islanders build churches wherever they settle. The Church becomes an affirmation of God’s presence in their journey.”<sup>55</sup> This is true of the Pacific Island leaders of St. Luke’s UMC. They are genuine in worshipping and extending their discipleship ministries to the poor and the needy in the local community.

The Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke’s UMC are conscious of the essence of their spiritual transformative leadership roles. The Christian leadership embodies unchanging principles and values, such as servanthood, living a moral life like-Christ, respecting all people because they were created in the image of God-*Imago Dei*. They are aware of the style of leadership which varies greatly depending upon the individual leader and the situation in which leadership is exercised. A crisis may call for an authoritarian style, and a learning situation may call for a prophetic style, but a spiritually transformative leadership calls for humility and servanthood, adaptability, and loving God with all their heart, soul and mind. And loving your neighbor as yourself.

Leadership style varies in every situation. In the past three years, these Pacific Island leaders have experienced spiritually transformative leadership which requires deep understanding and building of relationships with other cultures, other people and with God. These Pacific Island leaders have treasured the history of St. Luke’s UMC, the church’s setting,

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<sup>55</sup> Sela Panapasa, Kathy Thomas Sano and Monalisa Tu’itahi, *The Pacific Island Ministry Plan*, (Nashville, TN: The Advance Daily Christian 2012), 3.

relationships of different cultures worshipping together, and being respectful of other cultures and developing a harmonious relationship with everyone else. These Pacific Island leaders have positive attitude to render love and service whenever the need arises. Such a great diversity of people with rich cultural background and traditions have added a mosaic picture of beauty and love. A vivid image from Juana Borda's book, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit*, reflects that the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC symbolize the mythical bird who looks backward. "Sankofa is a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward and its head turned to look backward. Sankofa urges us to reflect on and learn from the past."<sup>56</sup> The Pacific Island leaders signal to all of us members of any church, "the past is a pathway to understanding the present and creating a strong future."<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Juana Bordas, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit*, 28.

<sup>57</sup> Juana Bordas, *Salsa, Soul and Spirit*, 28.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: Recommendations**

The emerging recommendations from this project have multiple layers. First, there is growth in the spiritual aspects of these Pacific Island leaders. The weekly Bible studies are the foundational sources in developing transformative Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC. These leaders continue to nourish their spiritual needs and become transformative in leading other members at St. Luke's UMC in fellowship with one another and with God. Ever since March 16, 2020, these Pacific Island leaders have rotated leading the Bible studies. They are enthusiastic about their sharing, reflecting, and empowering one another with the grace, peace, and love of Christ. Two Bible studies are offered in English, and one in Tongan. The Tongan leaders are rotating leading the Wednesday Bible studies. The rotation in leading the Bible studies among the leaders helps them to grow in their faith, witness their joy in sharing and have confidence in speaking publicly. The Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC are creating a vitality setting to collaborate with other members of the congregation. Their leadership style has helped these Pacific Island leaders to identify clearly their calling from God, their leadership gifts and skills and coordinate with everyone's gifts, skills, and experiences to connect with other members at church.

It has been a spiritual joy to observe these Pacific Island leaders lead, serve, teach, and preach the Word of God, to the other members at St. Luke's church. Psalm 119: 105 says, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."<sup>58</sup> These leaders now bring their traditions, cultures, heritages and life-experiences to the alter, as an offering for God's ministry. John C.

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<sup>58</sup> Psalm 119:105.

Maxwell's book *Leadershift*, quotes Oprah Winfrey saying, "the big secret is that there is no big secret. Whatever your goal, you can get there if you are willing to work."<sup>59</sup>

The Pacific Island leaders adapt their cultural backgrounds and their traditional ways of leadership and lead like Jesus. Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phyllis Hendry in their book, *Lead like Jesus*, stress that to lead like Jesus, the "leader must be leading from his/her heart, head, hands and habits and one's leadership will be radically transformed, and its impact is magnified." And they added that "a transformative leader must be changed from the inside: Leadership is primarily a heart issue. We believe that if we do not get our hearts right, we simply won't ever lead like Jesus."<sup>60</sup> The Pacific Island leaders testify that their relationship with their spouses, children and relatives, both near and far, and their relationship with God has brought forth transformational change.

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<sup>59</sup> John C. Maxwell, *LeaderShift*, 156.

<sup>60</sup> Ken Blanchard, Phil Hodges and Phil Hendry, *Lead Like Jesus: Revised Lessons from the Greatest Leadership Role Model of all Time*, 39.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Conclusion**

It was humbling to include the perspectives of two former District Superintendents in my questionnaires, which I still summarize as part of my conclusion. The kind of Pacific Island leaders that they would recommend to serve for the future in any UMC congregation are people who “are deeply developed in faith and honestly connect with God.” As “students of the Bible, people of prayer, people who live out their faith and serve as God’s servants, serve with humility, grace, and hope.” Moreover, a good leader for any congregation whether it is primarily a Pacific Island Church or multiethnic, is “open to continuing to learn and very much open to the work of the Spirit.” Therefore, even with challenges across culture and language, the Pacific Island leaders are encouraged “to seek out as much education as they can formally and or reading Biblical studies, church leadership, and theological materials.” At the same time, leaders themselves must be “developing new leaders and partners to work with them.” “We are in a time of great change for the church, with the need for connection through technology and new generations of persons exploring Christian beliefs and service. No one leader has all the gifts, graces, and skills to take on these challenges.”

Many UMC look to leaders for leadership, often “lifting them into important positions for years. This is quite appropriate, but a good leader knows when it is time to turn the team around him or her and to look beyond the circle of current leaders, to listen for other voices in decision making.”

This leads to the questions of what are the qualities of the Pacific Island leaders who can initiate transformational change in any local UMC. The kind of Pacific Island leader that is needed is “one who can go through transformational change into persons who are filled with God’s spirit of compassion and love, being in love with Jesus and with people.” Furthermore, a

leader “who values the work done by the founders of the church and have left their legacy for the current members of St. Luke’s UMC.”

It is quite clear that for the Pacific Island churches, there are “deep desires to continue cultural traditions and honor the elders.” Yet, in the congregation, there are younger persons, perhaps more bi-lingual, who are struggling with living fully into the traditions and growing to become transformational Christians in the communities in which they live. Good leaders must “continue to learn new ways and build a bridge to all generations.” In having to bridge the gap, a leader must know the UMC doctrines and the rules of the UMC denomination.

Transformational leaders need to “be trustworthy and centered deeply in their faith.” Some important qualities needed include: “integrity, honesty, grace-full-ness, a pastoral heart with compassion, understanding of the generational differences and expectations, ability, and interest in attending conversations, workshops, training and share new or helpful information with their leaders and congregations.” They must have “a heart of a servant, ability to identify new leaders across ages and genders, and to mentor to them or encourage others to do so, understanding of Wesleyan faith, deep grounding in faith and ability to share it with other members at church.” The good leader must “be able to reach out and to listen to community and beyond the current congregation.” The good leader must “be joyful for living a commitment to the people of the church and has great energy for the work of ministry and staying committed to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

As former District Superintendents, there are some changes that would be appropriate to administer to any local churches. The Pacific Island leaders “need to know the rules, the Discipline, the requirements of the Bishop in administering any local church.” This is a continuing challenge for the materials and directions are not available in multiple languages.

Much of the UMC is still run according to dominant cultural models, with the expectation that new groups or people are welcomed to be part of the UMC, but the UMC structure and ways of being do not respond flexibly or grow as the Church changes in membership. Even with those challenges, it is important that Pacific Island leaders and churches recognize that they are indeed United Methodist. They need to function under the policies and guidance of the UMC leaders and instructions. It has seemed that some Pacific Island leaders need to teach young people the UMC beliefs and policies. In addition, they need to encourage them to attend trainings and if they do not understand the language well, then have someone or other people who understands and then share with others when they go back. It is particularly important for the leaders of the Conference, District, and circuits to listen, learn and try to accommodate in different ways if there are important matters to share. The Conference leaders and district leaders should not assume it is a missionary world where the Christians give up their cultural ways to become a proper Methodist.

One of the factors for changes in the local congregation is that leaders must invite more women and younger people to take leadership roles as well as train them properly and listen to their ideas. The Methodist way has specific roles for pastors and leaders, and times where congregations may take a vote on a matter. The leaders must learn what the limits of their power are. Leaders do not have to know everything or do everything well. God gave many gifts to people and all are needed to make a strong community of faith and hence we cannot expect all gifts to be in one leader or even a few.

There are some observable problems that the Pacific Island leaders face in the local congregation, whether it is a cross-cultural or cross-racial. One of them is when the older generations want to keep things the same way and younger people are trying new things. This

seems to extend receiving younger pastors with less respect, perhaps, than their education or appointment may deserve.

The current divides in the United Methodist Church over LGBTQ issues are being lived out in many ethnic congregations. This is not an obstacle, but it may be challenging to bring all together when there are so many deep opinions. The leaders may seek other resources for help, such as the circuit leader or district superintendent, and make sure these leaders understand the background, the history, and the cultural expectations that someone who is not a Pacific Islander person would know.

Moreover, there have been times families, including leaders, may move from church to church if they are not happy with decisions or leadership. It can be very disruptive in the church structure, taking away the work of deepening faith. This can add a lot of pressure on the Pacific Island leaders. When there is a decline in membership the Pacific Island leaders may be discouraged and at the same time, they may be given an opportunity to rise and shine and make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

These days, technology has become an essential tool of ministry, but not all persons are equipped with the proper equipment or training to receive materials or communicate well. This is probably more so in the Pacific Island congregations. There have been times when church leaders would not communicate directly with the District Superintendent but had a designated person to send emails or materials. This creates more of a gap, with less direct communication. This is one of the weaknesses in Pacific Island leaders both at St. Luke's UMC and other Pacific Island congregations.

For some Pacific Island pastors who are serving cross-culturally, some dominant culture churches do not seem to be aware that they should try to learn about the differences that their

pastor brings, and they may see that pastor operates in a particular situation. Many dominant culture persons simply assume those of other cultures will adapt, but that is not fair nor appropriate.

Furthermore, some Pacific Island congregations live in expensive cities. These people may not live or work in the community of their own church, which creates layers of problems or issues. Some members must commute a far distance to attend church. This problem was revealed while I was serving the Oakdale and Riverbank UMC congregations. Some Tongans resided in Stockton and commuted every Wednesday for the midweek worship service and the Sunday worship services. Some are travelling to Oakland for their worship service.

A former District Superintendent states, “I am aware of the hierarchy family, Royal family, birth, age, and perhaps other factors that define Pacific Island communities. While this may be helpful, I have seen it as an obstacle in some situations.” St. Luke’s UMC does not experience such matters as the hierarchy and there are no nobles or chiefs in our congregation.

On the other hand, some Pacific Island leaders may face systemic racism. There are problems that some local congregations are not willing to take new possibilities and challenges new ways of hearing (different accents, program ideas, worship experiences) and different styles of ministry and with much more relational styles.

There are some strategies that Pacific Island leaders should acquire in operating a local congregation. The key for any successful church comes in the deepening of faith of the leaders and the people. The Pacific Island leaders must focus on real prayer, real Bible study, real service to the community. The Pacific Island leader must be knowledgeable about financial planning. The Sunday School should be led by very good teachers. There should be long range planning of ministries, with funding to support the mission and the vision of the church. A

transformational leader is a person who invites a prayerful process of discerning God's call for a congregation. Then, leaders plan together and take responsibilities with frequent communications and support.

There are ways to improve the leadership skills of the Pacific Island leaders, both clergy and laity in the California-Nevada Conference. The clergy and laity should provide mentors for both. Leaders need to learn from one another and leave space for new learning to take place. The UMC would continue to explore what it truly means to be a multi-cultural church in this day and time. We speak so many languages, which bring so many wonderful spiritual practices. All we need to do is to be willing to share our gifts and grow with one another and the graces of all, whatever their race or culture. Training or partnering are greatly appreciated and the Pacific Island leaders are needed to take the opportunities.

There are skills that seem to be lacking in Pacific Island leaders. Some leaders are less open to learning new things or asking for help when needed. Some may not want to appear weak. Some may be overwhelmed by the problems they face. Another factor that Pacific Island leaders cannot really meet is deadlines. Sometimes, when documents are required to turn in, to the Conference, Pacific Island leaders finds it hard to be on time. This is one cultural difference and it is problematic.

There are traits that Pacific Island leaders possess that empower them in their roles. Generally, they are wonderfully hospitable, and have intelligence, kindness, deep faith, commitment to community and family, patience with others who may not understand them, strong preaching, respect of the people for their leadership, ability to work through problems. Sometimes in their own cultural ways, dedicated to work hard to accomplish what is needed, sometimes through a rigid system to get the educational requirements or denominational

requirements for appointment or assignments, genuine love for their congregation and they are willing to be with their joys and their struggles and their sorrows.

An example of inspirational leaders is all member of the UM who are to live into the call to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, within their own contexts. Moreover, the way it is lived out in the Pacific Island communities and once again honoring and respecting the values, culture and the tradition is very important. Generally, however all leaders of every culture and ethnicity are first to be disciples of Jesus Christ, living into their faith and inviting others to have fellowship with the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that living is an inspiration for others.

In conclusion, an inspirational Pacific Island leader is a leader who would love his/her people and lead by example to help the followers understand that Jesus Christ is their hope and salvation, and he/she provides powerful life-changing worship experiences. This leader would invite folks to be involved in the world through the offering of hope, love and grace and forgives as well as providing food and housing and other ministries to those in need.

## **Appendix: Workshop 1: Survey**

1. In general, what kind of Pacific Island leaders do you recommend for St. Luke's UMC in the future?
2. What are some qualities of the Pacific Island leaders that would transform St. Luke's UMC? Please list and explain your responses.
3. What are the roles of the Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC and are these roles clearly displayed?
4. What are some changes that you wanted the Pacific Island leaders to take in administering the St. Luke's UMC now and in the future?
5. What are some of the observable problems or obstacles that the Pacific Island leaders face at St. Luke's UMC?
6. What are some strategies or methods that the Pacific Island leaders should acquire in operating the St. Luke's UMC?
7. How can we improve the leadership skills of the Pacific Island leaders (both clergy and laity) in the United Methodist denomination?
8. The Pacific Island leaders are capable and have the potential for leadership in local UMC congregations. Can you suggest one or more skills that seemed to be lacking in our Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC?
9. Our tradition and culture do play significant roles in strengthening our Pacific Island leaders at St. Luke's UMC. Can you name some of the traits that our Pacific Island leaders possess that empower them in their roles?
10. What does the definition of an inspirational leader in St. Luke's look like?

## **The Second Workshop: Survey**

1. As leaders of the St. Luke's UMC, can you suggest transformative ways so we could meet the needs of the St. Luke's UMC?
2. How can we go about achieving these transformative strategies now and the future?
3. Can you share your perspectives on how we find a smooth transition from our Pacific Island culture to the Western culture in being a transformative leader of St. Luke's UMC?
4. About 99% of us are first generation immigrants. Hence, how would you, a transformative leader wants to be more involved in St. Luke's UMC?
5. Share one aspect or a vision you have for St. Luke's UMC that reflects transformative leadership. (I have included the vision I have developed for St. Luke's UMC. You can add your own vision if you want to).

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